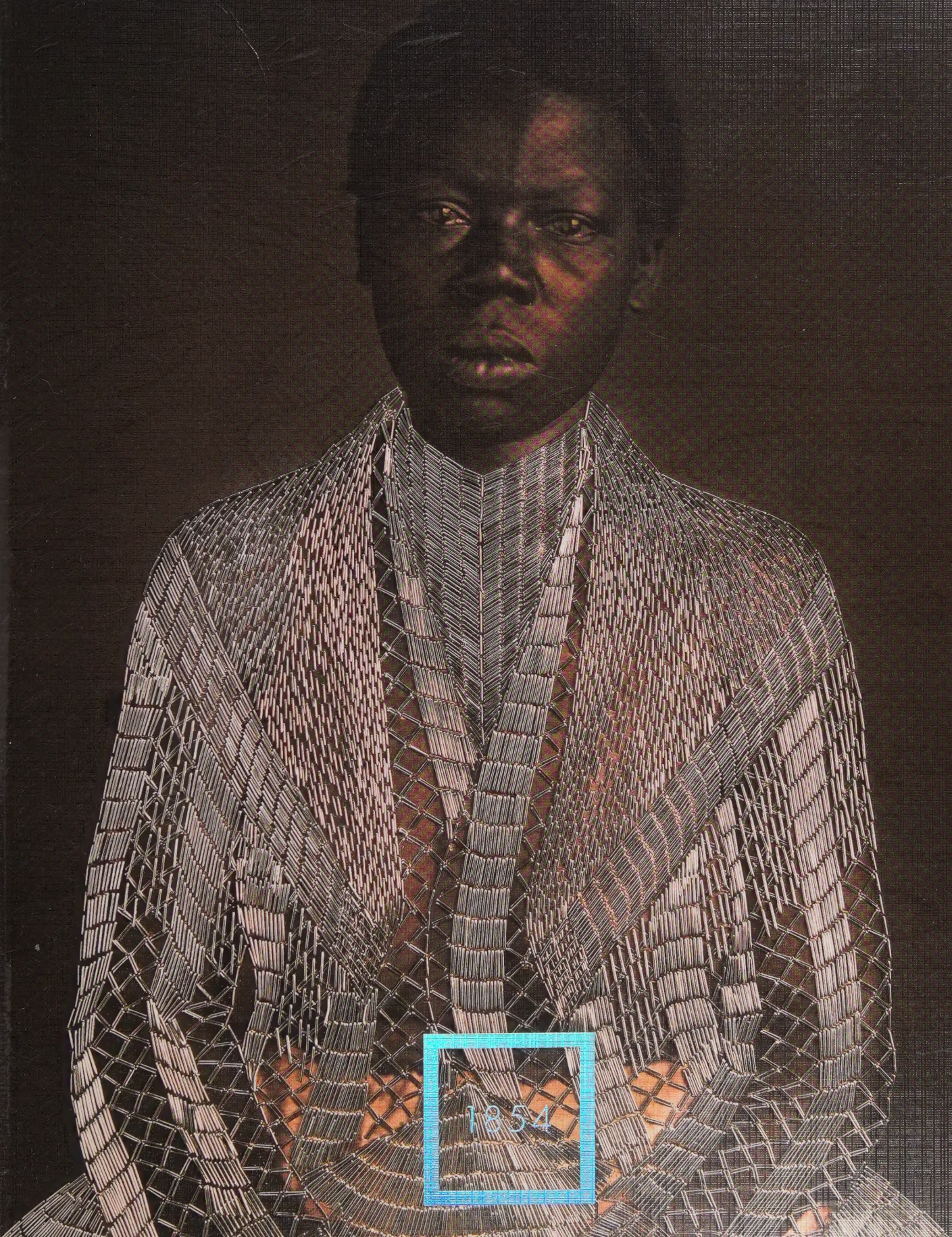


# British Journal of Photography

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# Editor's Introduction

## The Portrait Issue

"We've been making pictures of individuals for well over 600 years," says ICP curator Helen Molesworth, speaking of an upcoming exhibition at the centre. "[Portraiture] took hold, and we keep doing it. There's a reason for that." Humans are social creatures and faces fascinate us. Particularly our own, if we consider the rise of the selfie.

Indeed, the history of the portrait is closely connected with the evolution of photography. The original images that grace this issue's cover were taken in 1850, on the Edgehill Plantation in South Carolina. Jack [back] and his daughter Drana [front] were photographed with five others in their community. The images are the first-known photographs of enslaved people captured by an ethnographic lens to further the colonial cause. Here, however, they are redressed in silver. Their shimmering garments are 'stitched' by Sasha Huber, inspired by the clothing worn by abolitionists. "I wanted to use my energy to create portraits of our ancestors and people who had been silenced throughout history, who were – or still are – negatively impacted by colonialism; works that commemorate and memorialise," says Huber. We are thrilled to be working with Autograph, London, where Huber's work is on show. Inside, she is in conversation with curator Bindi Vora, in which she generously shares her process and motivation behind the work.

We discuss the many forms of portraiture through Kalpesh Lathigra's ongoing project discussing the politics of the passport photo; the life of famed self-portraitist Samuel Fosso; Aneesa Dawoojee's framing of Muay Thai fighters in London; and the muddled path into womanhood with Eva O'Leary. In our Intelligence section, we unpack the under-represented history of Black studio photographers in the US with curator Brian Piper.

Elsewhere, we reflect on the year gone by. In September we bid farewell to William Klein, who will be remembered for his creativity and experimentation. David Campany, a friend and collaborator, writes about Klein's "rich, restless, original and influential" life. After 16 years at the helm of The Photographers' Gallery, the esteemed Brett Rogers is departing. She reflects on her career in Any Answers.

And that's a wrap for 2022! Watch out for our end-of-year newsletters for anything you might have missed online, with some extra bits on the side. Otherwise, see you next year.

**Izabela Radwanska Zhang**  
Editorial director

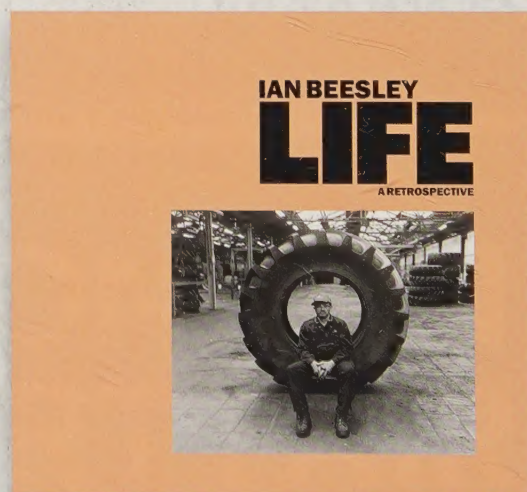




LIFE is the first-ever career retrospective of internationally acclaimed photographer, Ian Beesley. Born in Bradford, West Yorkshire, a northern city that played a major part in the Industrial Revolution, Beesley has a vast archive of photographs created during a career spanning over 45 years.

LIFE is a lifelong study of the north's cultural and industrial heritage, capturing an industrial society that is now largely extinct: kids playing outside, ladies talking in tightly terraced streets, grafters working at full pelt within vast Victorian factories. Beesley photographed the brutal closure of core heavy industries such as mining, iron and steel production. The nobility of labour and the horror of one's skills being forcibly rendered obsolete figure largely in his work.

[bluecoatpress.co.uk](http://bluecoatpress.co.uk)



**Life**

Photographer Ian Beesley





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**Kalpesh Lathigra**

Meditating on the very essence of portraiture, Kalpesh Lathigra has spent a decade utilising the ubiquitous passport photo to question issues of egalitarianism, hierarchy and privilege.

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TJ·BOULTING

Exhibition opens **December 2022**

TJ Boulting, 59 Riding House St, London W1W 7EG

1854.photography/awards

**British Journal  
of Photography  
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**Hajar Benjida solo show**

Image © Hajar Benjida, BJP IPA 2022 Winner.

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# 100

## Eva O'Leary

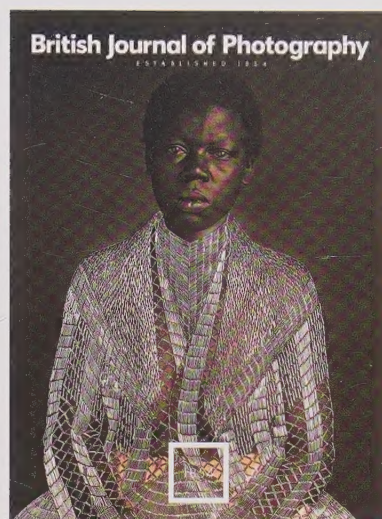
In her Pennsylvania college hometown, Eva O'Leary connects with the young female students, empowering them with agency over their own representation.



# 163

## Called to the Camera

A comprehensive exhibition at New Orleans Museum of Art focuses on the much overlooked social and photographic significance of Black American studio photographers.



Cover & back images © Sasha Huber.

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Issue 7911, Volume 169  
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## Featured contributors



### Igor Furtado

Based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Igor Furtado is a photographer and editor. He seeks to explore the tension between the natural and artificial, articulating new notions of fantasy and reality. In 2020, he was named a young creative pioneer by Regenerative Futures and in 2022, *Vogue* selected him as one of its 100 Next Great Fashion Image Makers.

[igorfurtado.com](http://igorfurtado.com)

**Pages 22–27**

On Location: Rio de Janeiro



### David Company

David Company is a curator, writer, editor and educator. His recent curated exhibitions include *William Klein: Yes. Photographs, Paintings, Films 1948–2013* and *Actual Size! Photography at Life Scale*. He has worked with institutions including MoMA, New York, and The Photographers' Gallery, London, and has written over 200 essays on photography. Company teaches at the University of Westminster and is curator-at-large for the International Center of Photography, New York.

[davidcompany.com](http://davidcompany.com)

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Spotlight: William Klein



### Sarah Moroz

Sarah Moroz is a Franco-American cultural journalist and translator. A New York City native, she has been living and working in Paris for nearly 15 years. Moroz has written about photography, art and literature for *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *i-D* and *Artforum*. Her favourite photographers include Baldwin Lee, Graciela Iturbide and Meryl Meisner.

[@sarahmoroz](https://twitter.com/sarahmoroz)

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Feature: Samuel Fosso

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# Contributors



This issue, we visit *Unframing Colonialism*, a new, thought-provoking exhibition at Centre Pompidou interrogating its collection's role in furthering the French colonial project. In Singapore, the largest-ever exhibition of south-east Asian photography considers the place of the medium in the region's past and present. Meanwhile, in New York, we preview ICP's upcoming show, which features three of the most prominent contemporary portraitists: Tacita Dean, Brigitte Lacombe and Catherine Opie. Plus, we are On Location in Rio de Janeiro, rounding up the city's creative highlights, and Brett Rogers, departing director of The Photographers' Gallery, is our Any Answers.

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Exhibition: *Living Pictures* **Pages 14–17**

Exhibition: *Face to Face* **Pages 18–21**

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Any Answers: Brett Rogers **Pages 48–49**

# Agenda



# In an eye-opening exhibition, Centre Pompidou unpacks the colonialism entrenched in its own photography collection from the critical interwar period of the 1930s

## Unframing Colonialism

Words by Izabela Radwanska Zhang

A new exhibition at Centre Pompidou takes a critical look at the tensions running through the photography scene in Paris in the 1930s. Titled *Unframing Colonialism*, the show draws on the 1931 Paris Colonial Exhibition in Vincennes, particularly the opposition to it by the Surrealist group of artists, as its starting point. Outraged by the show's blatant exploitation of the then-French colonies' culture and people, the Surrealists, including Man Ray, worked to expose the injustice, which included a counter exhibition titled *The Truth about the Colonies*. This Pompidou show is, in part, a continuation of what was shown there over 90 years ago.

The narrative of *Unframing Colonialism* winds through six core themes. Among them is *The Ethnography Show*, a section which details the renewed interest in ethnography during the period and the role photography played in it. Magazines and museums sent photographers all around the world

to capture images of paradisaical landscapes, marvelled at by readers back home in Europe, longing for an escape. They travelled further and further, including in Africa and Tahiti, vying to capture authentic, never-before-seen imagery of 'exotic' life. Henri Cartier-Bresson [4] and Marc Allégret were among them, but slowly became disillusioned with the colonial context and moved away from clichéd assignments. Some cheaper, weekly magazines exaggerated the 'exotic' theme, publishing questionable stories of community folklore, violent behaviour and cannibalism. In the *Body Models* section the focus turns to the fetishisation and eroticism of Black bodies, "fuelled by the vogue of 'negrophilia' during the interwar period" as the exhibition text reads. A harrowing vitrine in the centre of the room displays dozens of archival magazine spreads depicting young, naked 'women from the colonies'.

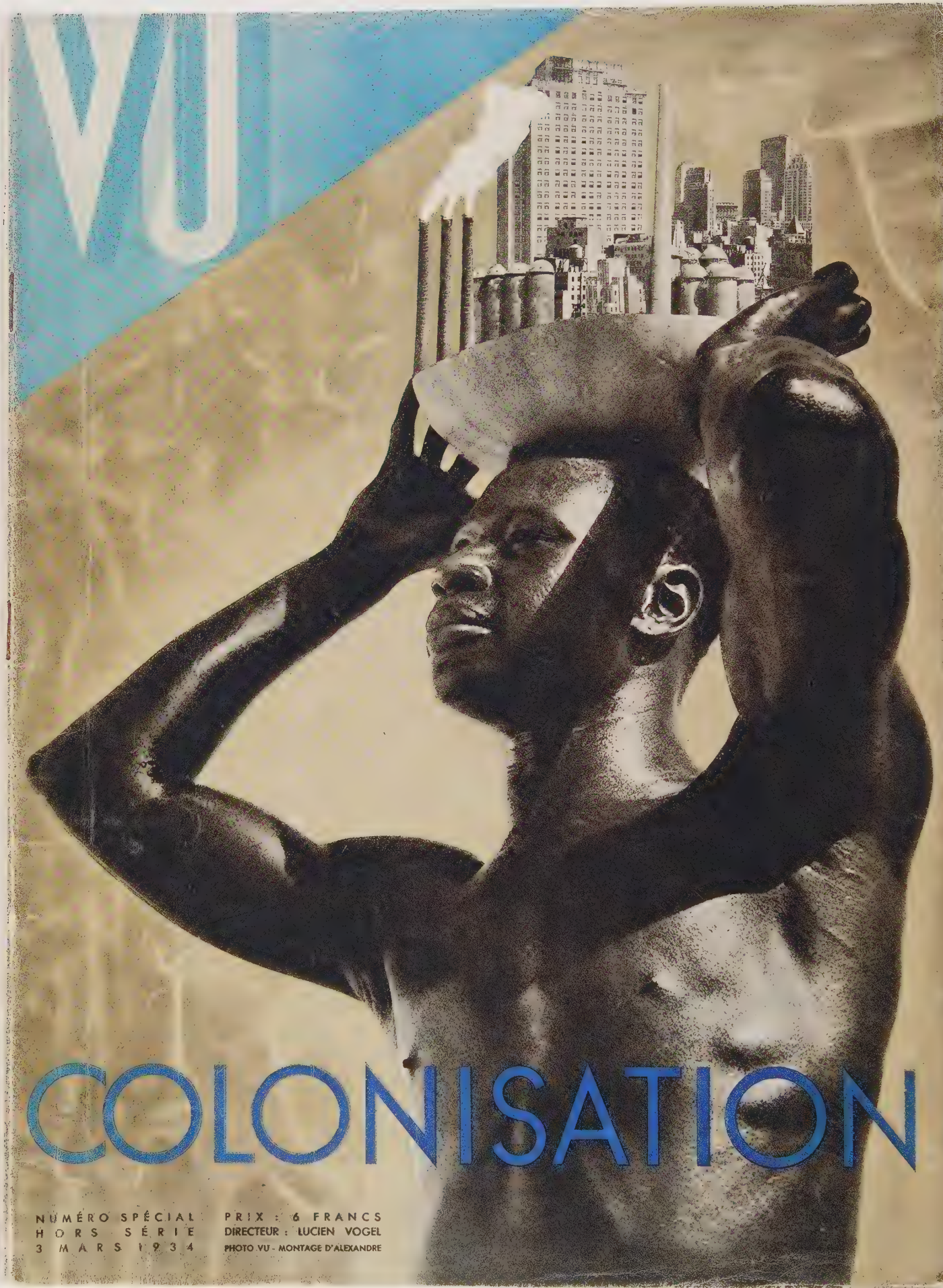
Later there is a shift towards a narrative that focused on the economic and resource-led benefits of the French empire. A policy of assimilation over 'othering' ensued. Here, we see a presentation of portraits of colonised people by the more humanist lenses of André Steiner, Thérèse Le Prat and members of the Alliance-Photo agency. Finally, there are examples of a new documentary style by the likes of Eli Lotar [1] and Jacques-André Boiffard, who consciously criticised the colonial project in their images. The exhibition's overall sentiment does not shy away from stating that there was still a long way to go.

At every turn, a strong emphasis is placed on the context of the image. Detailed captions elaborate on the author's position, but also the circumstances under which the image was commissioned and taken, where

1 Untitled, *Change and transport of hemp, Mazagan*, c1933–1935 © Eli Lotar. Courtesy of the Collection Centre Pompidou/MNAM.







# COLONISATION

NUMÉRO SPÉCIAL  
HORS SÉRIE  
3 MARS 1934

PRIX : 6 FRANCS  
DIRECTEUR : LUCIEN VOGEL  
PHOTO VU - MONTAGE D'ALEXANDRE





3

2 *VU n° 311 Hors-Série 'Colonisation', 1934.*  
© Alexander Liberman. Courtesy of the Collection  
Bibliothèque Kandinsky/MNAM

3 *Masque Punu, Test for the Film 'Culte Vaudou',  
1937 Exposition, 1937* © Maurice Tabard. Courtesy  
of the Collection Centre Pompidou/MNAM

4 *Montmartre, 1933* © Henri Cartier-Bresson.  
Courtesy of the Collection Centre Pompidou/  
MNAM/Magnum Photos.

and why it was first published, and how it was received. The press and its role in circulating visual propaganda is highlighted too. It makes for a rounded and critical viewing experience. Anti-colonialist essays and poems illuminated on screens intersperse the framed archives, collages and vinyls on the wall. Through headphones, one can listen to the audio recordings of Rocé and Casey – two French rappers whose personal work speaks to French colonial history and their experience of it – reading these texts.

All the works come from the Pompidou's photography department collection and the Bibliothèque Kandinsky. Damarice Amao, curator of photography at the Pompidou, says that this is an important aspect of the show. "It was not easy, as people are a little bit afraid," she explains. "It's a reflection [on the collection] that we have continued for some years, starting with a show called *Photography as a Class Weapon*, which we made four years ago. As the topic of decolonisation is discussed in this country, we as an institution must use critical tools to reflect on our collection. It's our responsibility to face it.

"I hope that people will understand the idea even if they are shocked," Amao adds. "Some photographs here are not easy to view. Depending on your sensibility, you might be more shocked by one or two. But that is why a museum is the right place to do it. It's a safe space to address it." **BJP**



4

## On show

*Unframing Colonialism* is on show at  
Centre Pompidou until 27 February 2023.  
[centrepompidou.fr](http://centrepompidou.fr)







# The largest-ever show of south-east Asian photography, from the 19th century to the present day, illustrates how the region has shaped the global history of the medium

## Living Pictures: Photography in Southeast Asia

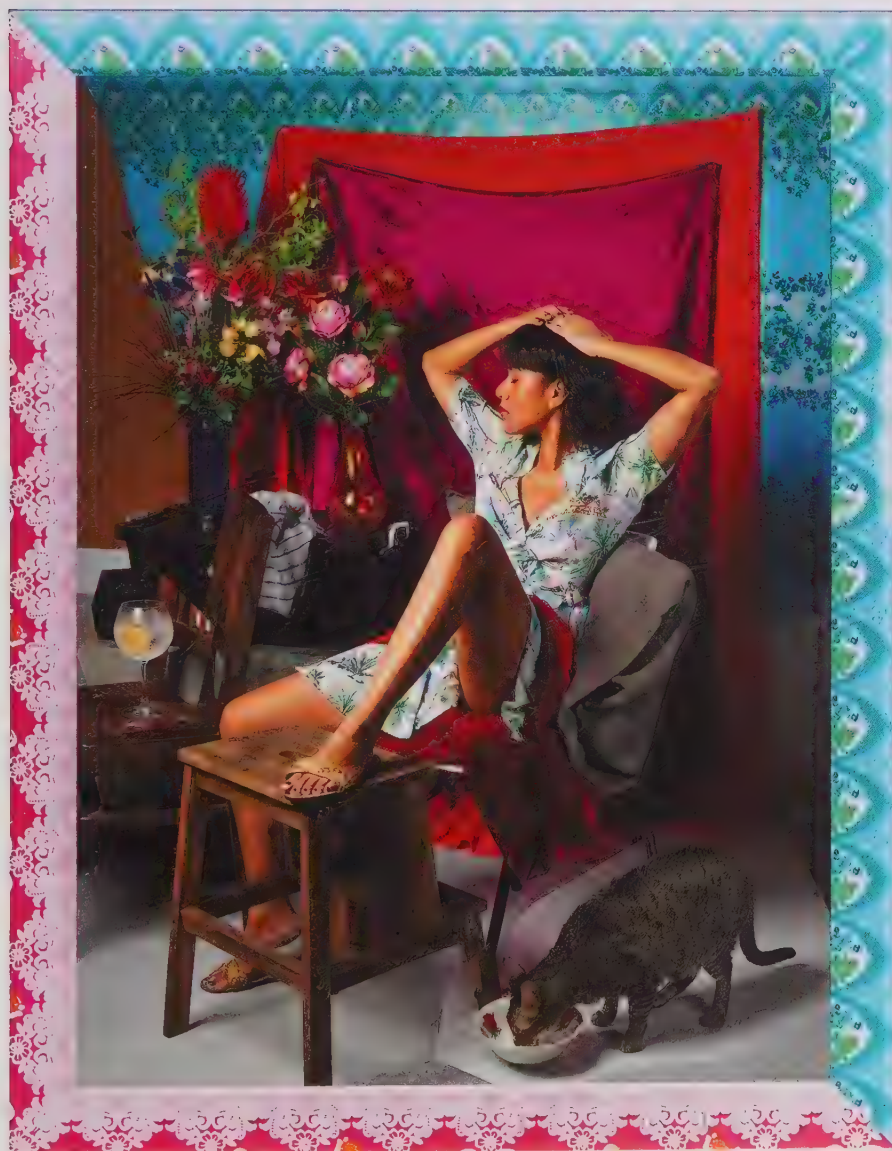
Words by Raquel Villar-Pérez

With more than 300 images by nearly 100 photographers, the largest-ever survey of south-east Asian photography is on show at the National Gallery Singapore. It attempts to place photography from and about the region in the compendiums of local art history, and in the history of photography at large. "Living Pictures: Photography in Southeast Asia considers the power of

photography in affecting the way we see and approach the world, and its mobilisation in systems of knowledge and representation since it arrived in the region in the mid-19th century," says curator Charmaine Toh. "This exhibition offers an additional strand in the tapestry that is the global history of photography."

The exhibition avoids grouping the photographs by formal categories defined by style or geography. Instead, the focus is on the conditions of production and reception of the image. "Living Pictures reveals the roles photographs have played in imperialism and nationalism, in constructing and asserting modernities, and in challenging class and gender hierarchies," says Toh. Divided into five sections, it begins by addressing the introduction of the photographic medium to the region. This section of the show, *The Colonial Archives*, critically examines photography's complicit relationship with imperialism. It presents images from the archive of GR Lambert & Co [6], a photographic studio established in 1867 in Singapore. With an increasing number of Western tourists visiting Singapore in the late-19th century, these kinds of photographic prints became popular as a form of souvenir. The archive of ethnographic types and landscapes influenced first impressions of the country for viewers all over the world.

With the introduction of photographic technology, locals quickly recognised the power of images to influence culture. In the following section, *Portraits and Performance*, we see the work of local studio photographers in the early-1900s. Initially, there was a demand for photographic portraiture from the affluent classes, who employed the medium as a site





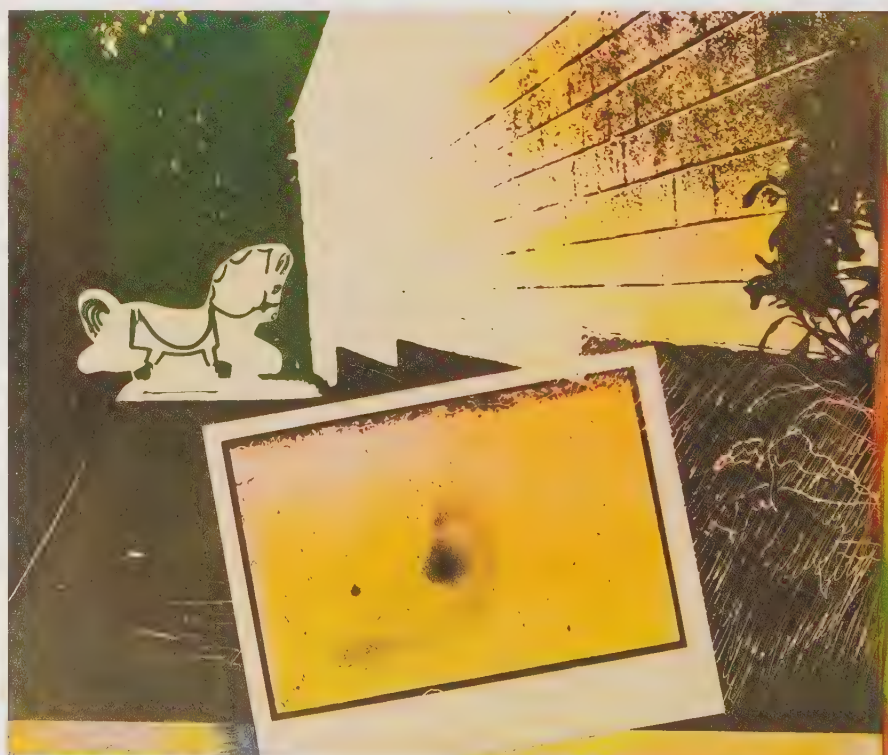
- 1 *Extracurricular political science class organised for 50 officials working undercover in the enemy's territory, Năm Căn Mangrove Forest, c1972* © Võ An Khánh
  - 2 *May in Manila/Hot Summer (After Balthus, Self Portrait), 2019*  
© Wawi Navarroza. Courtesy of Michelangelo and Lourdes Samson Collection
  - 3 Installation view of *Crossing the Farther Shore, 2014*, by Đinh Q Lê
  - 4 *Autobiographical Images #11, 1978*  
© Pramuan Burusphat
  - 5 *Group photograph of a Chinese man and women taken at a studio, c1910* © Lee Brothers Studio Collection/National Archives Singapore.
  - 6 *Harbour View, late-1890s*  
© GR Lambert & Co. Courtesy of National Heritage Board, Singapore
- 1, 3, 4, 6 Courtesy of Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

of modern self-fashioning. Soon, the interest for self-representation extended to the general public and photographs were made to commemorate family gatherings and social events. The third section, titled *In Real Life*, dives into the ability of photography to construct reality and history, and particularly the visual politics of war. This includes grainy documents of Viet Cong resistance during the Vietnam War by Võ An Khánh [1] – a haunting testimony of war and resilience.

Moving into the fourth section of the show, *New Subjectivity* explores the disappearing distinction between photography and fine art, and the emergence of photographic discourse. Representing reality as truth is no longer photography's endeavour, instead, it facilitates different meanings and understandings of it, and even reflects on the artificiality of the medium. Finally, *Contemporary Imaginations* immerses the visitor in the explosion of images in the present day. Referring to Walter Benjamin's question about whether art was photography, this section recognises the omnipresence of photography as 'a way of seeing, thinking, and interacting' with the world. Here we see the vibrant and multilayered tableaux of Filipina artist Wawi Navarroza [2], who combines self-portraiture with the assembly of disparate



3



4





objects to reflect on self and place. Representation is a recurring theme in the section, which unavoidably engages with political matters. In Dinh Q Lê's *Crossing the Farther Shore* [3], for example, we see found photographs of anonymous South Vietnamese families taken before the country's reunification in 1975.

Spanning over a century, the exhibition offers a generous introduction to the history of photography in south-east Asia. From functioning a tool of imperialism, to depicting the harsh realities of war, and as a burgeoning medium of fine art. Most importantly, the exhibition delivers an important reminder of the role that photography has played in reclaiming the region's own cosmologies. **BJP**

#### On show

*Living Pictures: Photography in Southeast Asia* is on show at the National Gallery Singapore until 20 August 2023.  
nationalgallery.sg



# Tacita Dean, Brigitte Lacombe and Catherine Opie's most famed portraits are brought together in New York, illustrating the connections between their varied methods

## Face to Face

Words by Isaac Huxtable

There are few creative moments more intimate than taking someone's portrait. As revealing as it is private, it is a collaboration between sitter and photographer. Looking at a portrait can be like listening in on a conversation, witnessing the moment. "I think all art is time travel," says Helen Molesworth, curator of the International Center of Photography's new exhibition *Face to Face: Portraits of Artists by Tacita Dean, Brigitte Lacombe and Catherine Opie*. Molesworth is fascinated with the "transhistorical" exchange between the sitter, photographer and viewer. "We've been making pictures of individuals for well over 600 years,"

she says. "We never stopped. [Portraiture] took hold, and we keep doing it. There's a reason for that."

Opening 27 January 2023, the exhibition draws on this eternal reading of the portrait. Having sat for both Catherine Opie and Brigitte Lacombe, Molesworth muses over the power of portrait photography from this unique personal experience. "The more I look at the work of Opie and Lacombe, the more I realise I was in the presence of artists with extraordinary senses of their own craft," she explains. Dean, Lacombe and Opie were chosen for the show due to their long-term commitments to portraiture,

1 *One Hundred and Fifty Years of Painting*, 2021  
© Tacita Dean.

2 *Jerome Caja*, 1993 © Catherine Opie









- 3 *Maya Angelou, New York, NY, 1987*  
Brigitte Lacombe
- 4 *Patti Smith, New York, NY, 2014*  
Brigitte Lacombe
- 5 *David, 2017* © Catherine Opie

particularly in balancing tradition with contemporary perspectives. The exhibition focuses on their portraits of notable artists and personalities, including Maya Angelou [3], Richard Avedon, Louise Bourgeois, Joan Didion, David Hockney [5], Miranda July, Rick Owens, Martin Scorsese and Patti Smith [4]. These 'artists on artists' photographs weave a web of visionaries, inviting the viewer into a conversation.

More than 50 photographs by Lacombe and Opie are on display, accompanied by two films by Tacita Dean. In preparation for the show, Molesworth dived into the "great depths" of the artists' archives. "We're only seeing the crust of multi-decade practices," she says. Molesworth speaks of Opie's dedication to queer liberation, Lacombe's "nomadic" approach, and Dean's sensitive studies of elder artists. "Nothing could be more different than the ways the three set up the portrait. I love the spaces in which [they] contact and diverge," Molesworth adds. She highlights how the three play a game of "call-and-response" with technique and tradition, picking and dropping photographic and portrait conventions as they please. The exhibition reflects on craft and conversation: between artist and sitter, viewer and image, and a wider interaction happening between the three photographers and the canon of portraiture. Through a history of artistic connection and camaraderie, the portraits hint at an intimate understanding happening in and out of the frame. **BJP**

### On show

*Face to Face: Portraits of Artists* by Tacita Dean, Brigitte Lacombe and Catherine Opie is on show at ICP from 27 January to 01 May 2023  
[icp.org](http://icp.org)









## On Location

Home to iconic beaches and the world-renowned carnival, Rio de Janeiro is one of Brazil's liveliest cities – with a photography scene to match. Imbued with a restless DIY spirit, the city's emerging artists, independent galleries and non-profit organisations are attracting international attention. Photographer and editor **Igor Furtado** guides us through the artistic hotspots



To experience Rio de Janeiro is to be overwhelmed by images. These are images that are beyond any static medium – they are alive and moving. As the second largest city in Brazil, after São Paulo, Rio has a dynamic and constantly evolving art scene, driven by the effervescent spirit of its native residents, known as ‘cariocas’. In Rio, we are continuously searching for ways to disseminate the artistic force of newer generations. In recent years, a growing number of independent galleries have projected young talents to a wider international audience. Despite the difficulties of gaining financial support for the arts, these spaces are proposing new ways of showcasing photography and building a community around it.

Change is being demanded socially and politically. In the last year, many protests have taken place in the city, demanding immediate action to tackle police brutality, the climate crisis, and the embezzlement of public

funds. Brazil’s troubled past is reflected in every fibre of its urban tissue. Beginning with the Portuguese invasion in the 1500s, the country’s colonial history is inextricably tied to that of photography. Until the end of the 19th century, photography’s main function was to document, but in Brazil it was a tool to maintain discriminatory social structures. The daguerreotype arrived in Rio in January 1840, and became a process that represented a colonial mechanism with the purpose to dominantly catalogue the people and the landscape. This was strongly encouraged by the emperor, Pedro II, who was a photographer and sponsor of the medium.

Through the decades, Rio has largely been depicted through a foreign gaze. In mainstream media, the city is sold as a getaway, home to iconic beaches and the biggest carnival in the world. The photographs produced in the region reinforced a stereotypical perception

of a tropical paradise overtaken by violence and poverty. It was only around the 1960s that photography began to be exhibited in museums, gaining a more artistic and experimental perspective of the practice. Nevertheless, image-making equipment remains expensive, which reinforces a technological gap that, to this day, privileges the upper class. Combined with governmental neglect of public cultural institutions, this financial barrier has slowed processes of transformation in the authentic visual representations of Rio and its inhabitants.

All of these challenges have shaped the city, which in its restless DIY spirit urges a rewriting of history by the artists of today. As we face a pivotal moment in political history, we continue to dream of reaching a place of autonomy, protecting histories and lands that are important to us, but which remain unknown around the world. Rather than talking about our struggles, we hope we will be recognised for distinguished knowledge and talent, and continue to propel our international influence. **BJP**



Above: Self-portrait, 1975 © Walter Firmo.



## Artist-in-residence: Rodrigo Oliveira

@rodyoli

Rodrigo Oliveira is based in Barra de Guaratiba, a fishing village one hour away from the centre of Rio. His ongoing project documents the queer BIPOC community inhabiting the peripheries of the city. Through intimate and powerful portraits, he aims to deconstruct the misrepresentation of queer bodies. **BJP**



*Escapismo, Rio de Janeiro, 2022*  
© Rodrigo Oliveira

## Galeria 5Bocas

Rua Ourique 1234, Brás de Pina,  
Rio de Janeiro, RJ 21011-130

@galeria5bocas

5Bocas gallery takes its name from the favela where its founder, Allan Weber, lives. The 29-year-old artist opened the space last year, with the intention of offering new work and leisure opportunities for local people. With group exhibitions and future open calls planned, the gallery is part of a network of independent institutions supporting emerging artists outside the commercial circuit. These concerns are a reflection of Weber's own practice, which is focused on "representing the lower income social class that with a lot of time, struggle and sweat are achieving their goals, even without access and opportunities". **BJP**



### On our radar

#### Livraria Leonardo da Vinci

Marquês do Herval, Avenida Rio Branco 185, Subsolo 1, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 20040-007

This independent art bookstore was founded in 1952 and is still located in the basement of the Marquês do Herval building – a modernist masterpiece by the Roberto brothers in the commercial heart of the city.

[leonardodavinci.com.br](http://leonardodavinci.com.br)

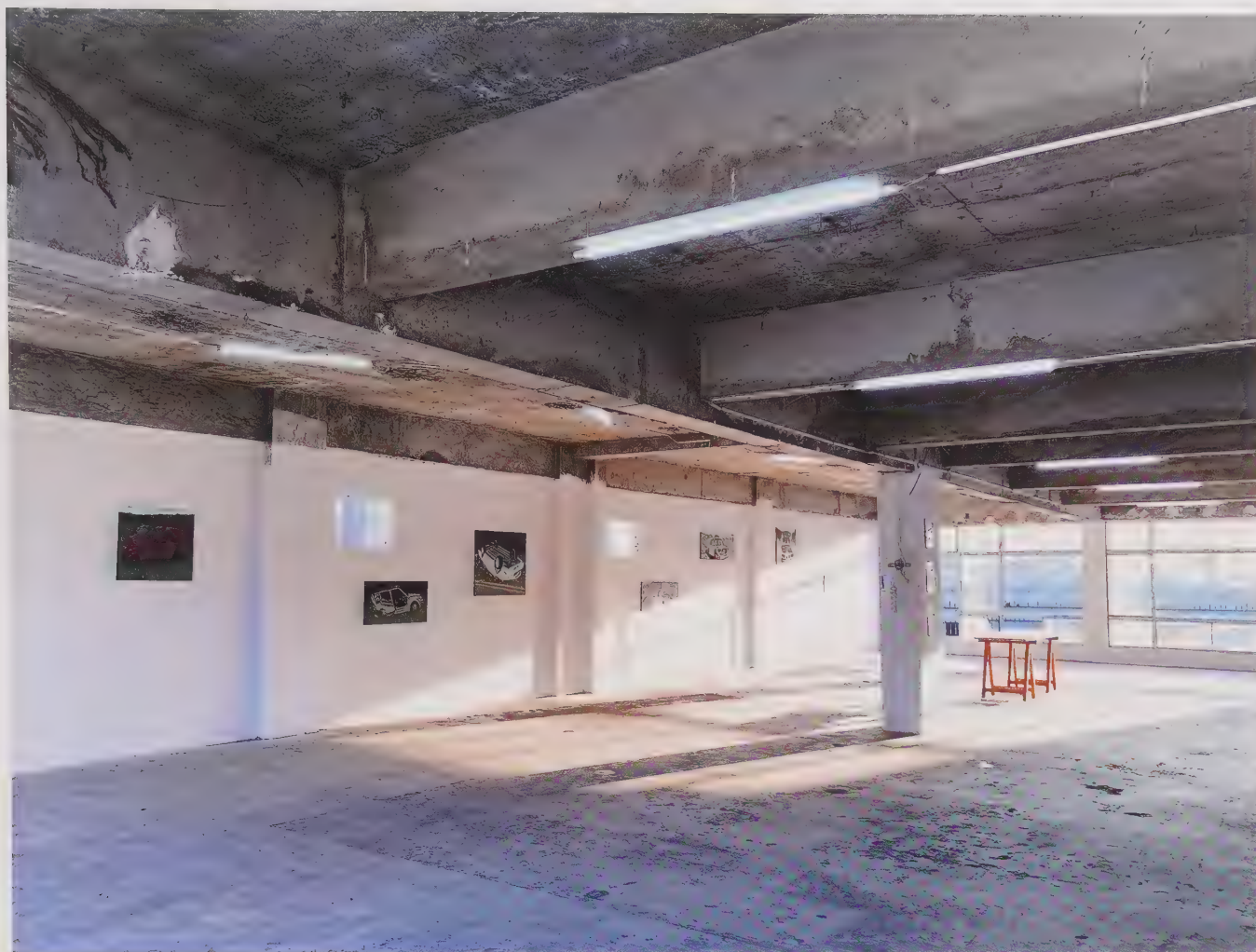
#### Centro Municipal de Arte Hélio Oiticica

Rua Luís de Camões,  
Praça Tiradentes 68, Centro,  
Rio de Janeiro, RJ 20051-020

CMAHO was opened in 1996 to house part of the collection of works by the artist Hélio Oiticica. Throughout its existence, it has maintained the main ethos of a free cultural centre, hosting exhibitions of great Brazilian artists and supporting their productions.

@cma.heliooitica





## Galeria Refresco

Rua Sara 18, 4º Andar, Santo Cristo,  
Rio de Janeiro, RJ 20220-090

[refresco.art.br](http://refresco.art.br)

Located in the Santo Cristo neighbourhood in the port area of the city, Galeria Refresco has been operating since 2019, holding exhibitions, workshops and artistic residencies. Its latest exhibition presented work by Rio native Fernanda Liberti, a recent graduate of London's Royal College of Art and laureate at the Prix Dior de la Photographie. Collaboration is at the heart of the gallery's mission. For Liberti's show, it welcomed fellow artists Vinicius Gerheim, Thadeu Dias, Manoela Bencze and Mariana Honório to be included in the artistic production.

Previous exhibitions have included a series by trans non-binary artist Rodrigo Masina Pinheiro and Ton Zaranza who exhibited portraits of LGBTQ+ people made on 28 October 2018 – the day far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro was elected president – and how this event resonated in their lives. **BJP**



Top: The exhibition *Longe do Fato* by Daniel Frickmann on show at Galeria Refresco

Above: Images from the exhibition *Não Leve Flores* by Ton Zaranza and Rodrigo Masina Pinheiro





### On our radar

#### Casa Bicho

Rua Caio de Melo Franco 375,  
Jardim Botânico,  
Rio de Janeiro, RJ 22461-190

Casa Bicho is a mid-century art house set within Rio's botanical gardens, overlooked by Christ the Redeemer. Abandoned for a decade, the building reopened in 2019 hosting exhibitions, concerts and weekly takeovers by Brazilian artists with a unique mix of nature, history and art.

@casabicho

#### Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage

Rua Jardim Botânico 414,  
Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 22461-000

Set within a park, Escola de Artes Visuais is an art school offering long-term photography courses. Visitors can access the main building, which holds exhibitions and an open library with reams of interesting photographic titles.

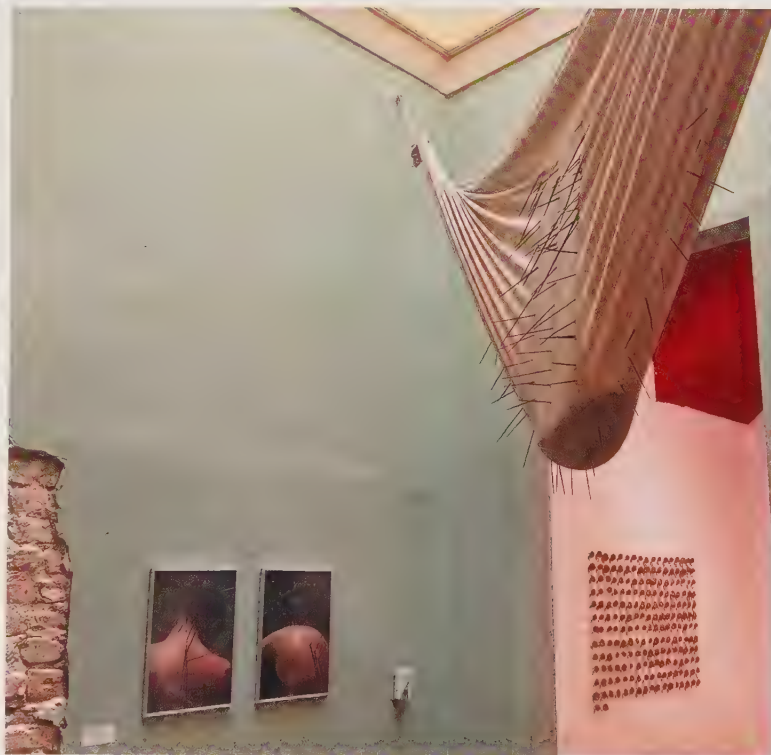
eavparquelage.rj.gov.br

## Casa da Escada Colorida

Escadaria Selarón 18, Lapa, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 20241-120

casadaescadacolorida.com

This multipurpose arts centre runs artistic and curatorial residency programmes, as well as exhibitions, workshops and film screenings. The project's mission is to strengthen the creative community and democratise culture through education. The Casa is also a hub for the annual FotoRio – a 20-year-old festival offering a series of exhibitions and portfolio reviews every November. **BJP**



The work of Tuca Mello on display  
at Casa da Escada Colorida © Tuca Mello



The group exhibition *Corpo a Corpo* on  
show at Instituto Moreira Salles.  
Image © Leonardo Wen.

## Instituto Moreira Salles

Rua Marquês de São Vicente 476, Gávea,  
Rio de Janeiro, RJ 22451-040

ims.com.br

Founded by Brazilian banker, politician and philanthropist Walther Moreira Salles, Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS) is a non-profit organisation with a goal to promote the development of culture in five areas: photography, literature, libraries, visual arts and Brazilian music. Holding an archive of two million images, it is arguably Brazil's most important photographic institution. IMS was set up in 1992 in Poços de Caldas, a spa city north of São Paulo, and has since established headquarters in São Paulo and Rio. The Rio outpost sits within Salles' old residence, in the affluent Gávea neighbourhood. Surrounded by the spectacular forests of the Tijuca National Park, the space hosts film screenings, concerts and cultural events, as well as housing music and literature collections. The house and grounds are an attraction in themselves: a prime example of 1950s modernist architecture, designed by Olavo Redig de Campos with landscape design by Roberto Burle Marx.

As well as publishing exhibition catalogues and books, IMS prints a biannual contemporary photography magazine, *ZUM*, and a quarterly publication of critical essays, *Serrote*. Its current exhibition presents around 200 images by the Brazilian Magnum photographer, Miguel Rio Branco. On view until 26 March 2023, the show traces work made in the 1970s to the present day, reinforcing the originality and relevance of Rio Branco's restless experimentation. **BJP**





Visitors view artwork at Galpão Bela Maré.

## Galpão Bela Maré

Rua Bitencourt Sampaio 169, Maré,  
Rio de Janeiro, RJ 21044-261

belamare.org.br

Located in the favela of Maré, Galpão Bela Maré is a cultural centre founded in 2011 by Observatório de Favelas – a non-profit organisation that aims to reduce inequality and strengthen neighbourhoods. During its decade of existence, the centre has contributed to the decentralisation of cultural facilities. Its prolific residency programme encourages creatives to reflect on the places they live – the people, the streets, and the stories they hold. The programme not only benefits the participating artists, but aims to provide inspiration for generations to come. Hosting exhibitions both inside the space and along the streets of Maré, it reaffirms the favelas as a fertile stage for contemporary art. **BJP**



### On our radar

#### Vapt Vupt Lab

Rua Tonelero 153,  
Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro,  
RJ 22030-001

This little shop in Copacabana offers analogue development of colour and black-and-white film. It also sells and scans 135mm film and provides digital magnification on photographic paper.

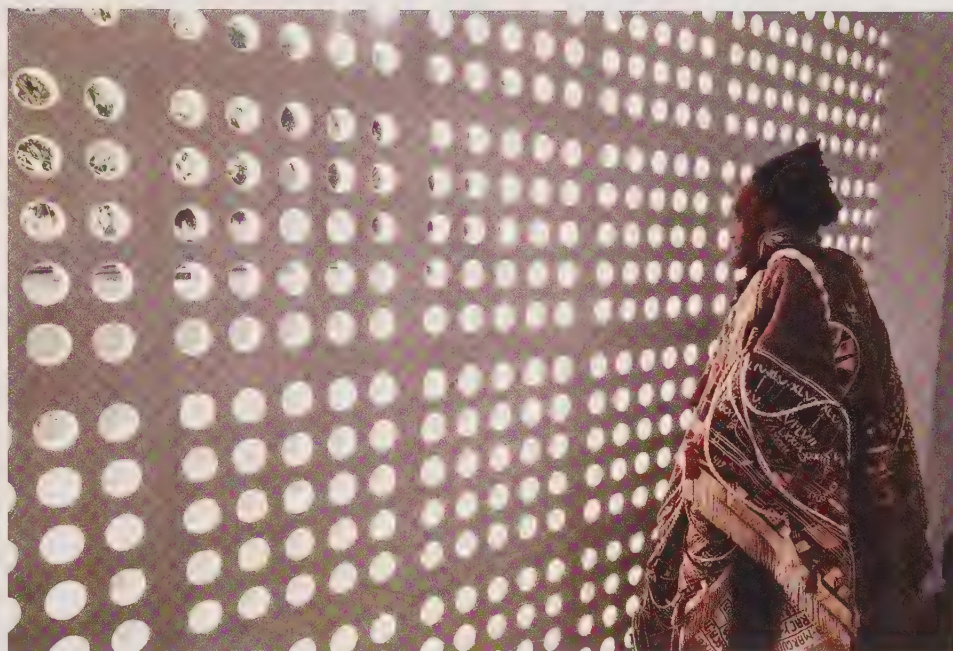
vapt-vupt-lab.business.site

#### Livraria da Travessa

Centro, Leblon, Ipanema,  
Botafogo, Barra, Niterói

Livraria da Travessa is one of the largest bookstore chains in Brazil, but it started out in 1975 as a small bookshop called Livraria Muro. Located in a gallery basement in the Ipanema neighbourhood, it became a stronghold of political resistance, hosting poetry performances and book launches that opposed the military regime. Travessa now has six stores in Rio, plus more in São Paulo, Brasília, and one in Lisbon, Portugal.

travessa.com.br



Arthur Bispo do Rosário, *Colônia Juliano Moreira, Rio de Janeiro*, 1985 © Walter Firmo.

## Artist-in-residence: Walter Firmo

@walterfirmo

It is impossible to talk about photography in Rio without mentioning Walter Firmo. Born 85 years ago in the northern neighbourhood of Irajá, he took up photography at 15, when his father gifted him a Rolleiflex. By 18, he was working professionally for local publications like *Última Hora* and *Manchete*. Soon he was sent on assignments, including a six-month stint in New York in 1968, where he documented the civil rights movement. Back in Rio, he captured the transitions of the city, and produced iconic portraits

of Brazilian musicians such as Cartola and Clementina de Jesus. Straddling the worlds of documentary, photojournalism and fine art, Firmo's use of vibrant tones confirmed his mastery of colour. Between 1986 and 1991, he served as the director of the Photography Institute at Brazil's National Arts Foundation. He supposedly retired in 2007, but remains active. This year, he exhibited a retrospective of over 250 photographs at the Instituto Moreira Salles in a show that affirmed his influence in Brazil's photographic history. **BJP**



Rebuilding life in Ukraine, ecological turmoil, socioeconomic inequality – sadly, none of these crises are new. However, through this issue’s projects, they are all addressed in innovative ways. Kateryna Radchenko explores one Ukrainian city’s determination to protect its culture from Russian attacks. Chloé Milos Azzopardi’s health struggles contribute to her critique of ‘Capitalocene’ – the role of capitalism in the climate emergency. And Chris Hoare’s love of his hometown creates a prism through which to view the cost-of-living crisis.

Kateryna Radchenko **Pages 29–33**

Chloé Milos Azzopardi **Pages 34–37**

Chris Hoare **Pages 38–41**

# Projects



Zhovti Vody is a small town in Ukraine's Kamianske region. Its name – literally translating to 'yellow waters' – was ascribed in 1895, due to its serene location on the Zhovta River. However, when the country was part of the Soviet Union, classified

government correspondence referenced it by a different name – Mailbox 28 – to keep its location a secret. The town was then home to a key uranium extraction site, a crucial part of the Soviet nuclear project. Given the significance of the industry and need for discretion, only a limited number of people were permitted to go in and out, and residents were rewarded for staying put with disproportionately comfortable lifestyles compared to the rest of the county's living conditions.

There are up to 25 former closed cities in Ukraine, but this one was of particular interest to Kateryna Radchenko because it was where her grandfather was born. She was fascinated by the morbid contradiction of a "Soviet paradise" luring people into living somewhere that was exposed to the dangers of radiation. However, when the



## Kateryna Radchenko













factories were forced to close in 1991 as the Soviet Union fell, "the way of life changed completely, the city was forgotten," says Radchenko. "The younger generation started to leave, the older generation lost their jobs. It was a time of stagnation."

Radchenko began working on a project over a decade ago, but was forced to start again when her computer and hard drive were stolen in 2016. In 2019, she returned to Zhovti Vody and unexpectedly, the focus of the work changed. "I noticed that the city is still alive. It's comfortable, small and calm," she says. "I was surprised that people my age had chosen to stay to work and develop the place they were living in, rather than move to bigger cities... This is a small drop in the ocean compared to the wider population. But people are trying to build something good from the ruins."

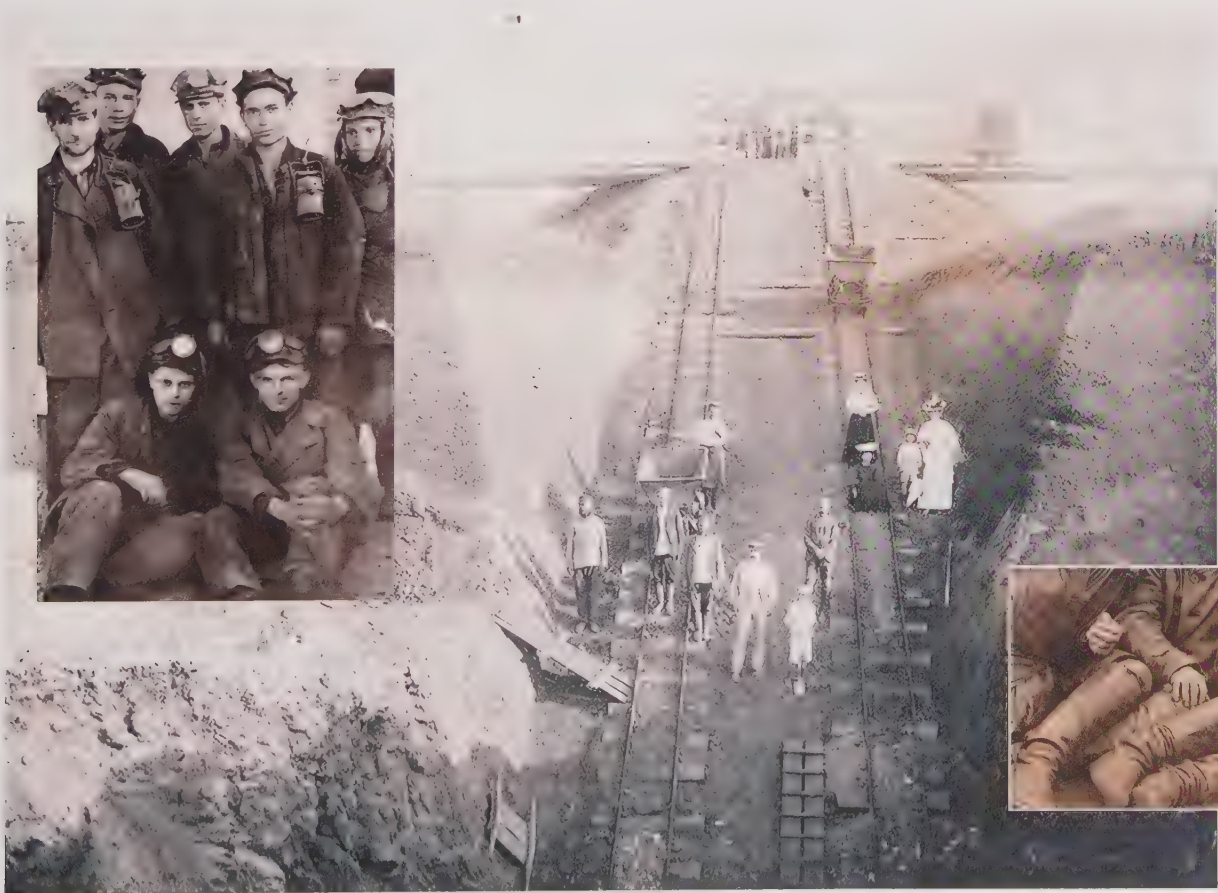
Her ongoing project, then, is a portrait of the city as it is today, and the people working to place it back on the map. Radchenko is also a curator, researcher and the director of Odesa Photo Days, and the series draws heavily on historical archives for context. "It's not possible to tell a story without knowing about the past," she explains. "I'm trying to understand the connection between the past and future. From the utopian city built on the heavy uranium industry, to what it is today and how it has changed over time."

Visibility and invisibility are important and recurring themes, from the coded name of Mailbox 28 to the secrets kept from local citizens. Indeed, traces of radiation, left behind after decades of mining, still pollute the surrounding soil and water. "It's difficult to solve, radiation spreads fast and you can't see it," says Radchenko. "We have our doubts, but we can't leave our country. Despite it bringing many problems – cancer is the second leading cause of death in Ukraine – we accept it and move on." The intangibility of the problem is perhaps another reason why the impetus to find solutions has fallen by the wayside – environmental hazards become less of a priority when people are fighting to survive air strikes and bombs.

The current war began when Russia invaded and annexed Crimea in 2014. The major attack earlier this year, on 24 February, shifted Ukraine's focus to defence once again. Russia's high-risk targeting of the nuclear power plants is a haunting echo of the past. "For a long time, Russia used the territory of Ukraine to extract uranium for the development of nuclear weaponry," says Radchenko. "Now, the nuclear plants in Ukraine and Russia's nuclear weapons are being used to blackmail Ukraine and the rest of the world. We are entering into a new chapter in this story." **BJP**

@radchenko\_ua











When Chloé Milos Azzopardi was 16, she began to lose her sense of self. A sudden family loss triggered a depersonalisation disorder, an experience of extended detachment from one's body, actions, feelings or thoughts. "My relationship to my body became blurry, I didn't know where it started and where it stopped," says the French photographer, now 28. "I couldn't recognise my own face. I became a stranger to myself."

The trauma disorder lasted for more than a decade. Over time, Azzopardi learned to cope by observing her environment and projecting herself into the 'sensations' of animals, plants and ephemera. "It was as if I didn't have

boundaries and had dissolved into everything around me," she says. "I was projecting myself into other beings, so I could understand what defined them to understand what was defining me. It was like working with projections to get back to myself." This complex process is brought to life in her ongoing project, the roots of which coincided with her discovery of photography during her fine art degree at the European School of Visual Arts: "I could meet people and discover things that I wouldn't have if I didn't have a camera," she recalls.

Her relationship to the medium intensified during a six-month research programme in China in 2017. Azzopardi was initially hesitant about travelling so far because of her depersonalisation disorder, but in the suburbs of Shanghai she experienced a strange sense of homecoming. "What struck me in China were the huge changes in the cities and countryside. Everything was construction or destruction. There was no limit between urban and rural," she says. "I felt that the identity of the landscape reflected the lack of consistency in my body. I recognised myself in it, and I felt comfortable there." In an attempt to represent this "spectral" experience, Azzopardi began to hunt for ghosts: a dog in an abandoned building, a dust sheet blowing in the wind, a glint of street light on an old mirror. "The important thing was the sensation of coming face-to-face and recognising each other, of echoing the spectrality of the other," she says of her subjects.

As her project progressed, Azzopardi's long-held fascination with animals came to the fore. Edited for colour but never content, her ethereal images dart between planned and spontaneous moments, creating a "surreal ecosystem". A snake is cradled in human hands, tiny fish appear to whisper in the ear of a swimmer, and butterflies eat sugar off fingers. The photographs are chapters in her "futuristic fable", where bonds between different species are formed and vulnerabilities are approached with care.

Sitting somewhere between documentary photography, magical realism and eco-fiction, the project is titled *Les formes qu'ils habitent en temps de crise* (*The forms they inhabit in times of crisis*). The crisis refers to Azzopardi's personal struggle, but also to that of the planet, as she responds to the 'Capitalocene'. An alternative concept to the Anthropocene, it highlights the actions of capitalism, rather than all humans, in contributing to this era of ecological crisis. "I'm trying to construct post-Capitalocene imaginaries that we can project ourselves into," she explains. "A lot of fiction is about the end of the world, but I want to reimagine the way we behave with other living beings – to recognise ourselves in the otherness in front of us, to not enter into a system of dominance. My disorder opened up possibilities of what our relationship to our surroundings could be if we weren't so centred on ourselves." **BJP**

[chloemilosazzopardi.com](http://chloemilosazzopardi.com)



## Chloé Milos Azzopardi











On 07 June 2020, in Bristol, southwest England, a bronze statue of slave trader Edward Colston was toppled from its plinth. As anti-racism protesters rolled, pushed and dragged the heavily graffitied figure into the city's harbour, the eyes of the nation – and indeed parts of the world – were fixed on Bristol and its people.

The removal of Colston's effigy plunged the city into the midst of a fierce debate: was this vandalism or an appropriate fate for a man whose fortune was made, at least in part, from the servitude of others? While politicians and campaigners across the country debated the legitimacy of the act, in Bristol, Chris Hoare observed as local Facebook groups filled with comments from opposing factions. "One of the most notable things was how it divided the city, with many people, particularly on the fringes, disagreeing with [the statue] being pulled down," Hoare recalls. The photographer's use of the word 'fringes' is not incidental. He is referring to Bristol's geographical edges, far removed from the affluent city centre, and to those living on the margins of its society. It is within these margins that, in the weeks following the statue's dethronement, Hoare began his ongoing body of work, *Seven Hills*.

Born and raised in Bristol's suburbs, Hoare speaks passionately about his hometown and the increasing division he has witnessed within it. "The city centre, areas around the docks, are being taken over by people moving in with lots of money to buy luxury apartments, people that can't even relate to those on the edges of the city," he explains. For Hoare, however, the people on the margins are those he relates to most, people from the places he grew up in, whose tender portraits compose much of this

highly personal series. His images have a candidness and familiarity about them. They illustrate the reality of everyday life for those living in places such as Hartcliffe, which is among Bristol's most deprived areas.

Alongside these portraits, *Seven Hills* explores some of Bristol's greatest landmarks, places that signify its prosperous and, at times, mythologised history. The project takes its name from one such popular notion: that the city's sloping landscape echoes the seven hills that famously sit at the geographical heart of Rome.

These juxtapositions – between gentrified and neglected locations, between historical wealth and increasing socioeconomic hardship – flow through *Seven Hills*, much as the River Avon flows through the city of Bristol. By tracing this river's path through the thriving city centre to the suburbs where the cost-of-living crisis rages, Hoare creates a portrait of a place divided by far more than the opinions of its inhabitants. "It's my personal response to a city I love so much," Hoare says. "But it's important to show the other side of Bristol, the side which goes against the preconception of the city." **BJP**

[chrishoare.org](http://chrishoare.org)



## Chris Hoare















Opposite: *Nina + Simone, Piazza di Spagna, Rome, 1960, for Vogue*

Page 44: *Gun 1, Broadway & 103rd Street, New York, 1954*

Page 46: *4 Heads, Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, New York, 1954*

Page 47: *Antonia + Simone, Barbershop, New York, 1962, for Vogue*

All images © William Klein. Courtesy of Howard Greenberg Gallery.

**David Company**, a long-time collaborator and curator of a major **William Klein** retrospective at the ICP, reflects on the lauded photographer's life and work following his death earlier this year

# Just





# William







William Klein died in early September at the age of 96, just as the major retrospective of his work that I had curated for the International Center of Photography (ICP), in New York, was closing. There are very few who have had a creative life as rich, restless, original and influential as Klein's. He seemed to enjoy several careers at once: abstract artist; designer; painter; street photographer; fashion photographer; documentary filmmaker; fiction film-maker; book-maker; writer. The multi-hyphenated life in art is commonplace today, but Klein pioneered it. It was natural to him. It perplexed people, of course, especially museum curators who, for decades, could not quite get their heads around such omnidirectional brilliance. This bothered Klein – but not too much. Most of his work was made for the pages of books and magazines or the big screen, not the gallery wall.

Perhaps even more impressive than the range of Klein's practice was its longevity. He made consistently exceptional work for well over 60 years. It was all one artistic adventure, informed and shaped by an enormous appetite for life and a curiosity about all people. New York, Paris, Milan, Rome, Senegal, Algiers, London, Scotland, Tokyo, Moscow, Turin – he reached out everywhere, talked with people, got to know strangers and invited them into the spontaneous game of making a photo or a shot for a film. Young street kids acted like movie stars or gangsters. Fashion models brought their personalities and poses. All were welcome in the Klein frame. They gifted their energy and humanity; and Klein brought his timing and astonishing flair for complex composition. A wide lens meant he had to be up close to fill the frame, not hanging back, invisible. There is a deep ethic in this kind of interaction, and it chimes with image-makers today who grapple with the often-awkward power relations of the camera. Klein was simply upfront about what was happening – and you could see it.

At ICP, we were all deeply saddened by the news of his death but not altogether shocked. Klein had not attended the opening of his exhibition in June, making this the first show of his work that he was not able to visit. It was bittersweet in more ways than one. He was born in New York in 1926, left for Europe in 1946, and lived most of his life based in Paris. The show was his artistic homecoming, in ICP's building on the Lower East Side, just around the corner from the clothing store his Hungarian immigrant grandparents had set up on Delancey Street. Years later Klein made some of his grittiest and most energetic street photos here, as well as some of his most playful fashion images.

It is almost beyond belief that his New York street pictures of 1954–55 were his very first attempt to photograph the outside world. Before that he had only made abstract photographs in his darkroom. But Klein and his camera were so hungry they seemed to swallow the city whole. The screaming commerce, the racial tensions, the bravado and bullshit, the tenderness and fragility. The 1956 book of those photographs, *New York*

– shot, edited, designed and written by Klein – could well be the most influential photobook ever published. From there on, his pace was breathless, producing more city books, conquering fashion photography, and making documentary and fiction films.

I could have put together a show just about Klein in 1964. In that year alone, he was at the top of his game at *Vogue*; he published his third and fourth photobooks (*Moscow* and *Tokyo*); he was still painting in his studio; and was in Miami to shoot the first documentary about the boxer Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali). That movie is electrifying, with Clay and Klein both spontaneous and sparring joyously with each other. It screened all over the world, most notably in Africa, where it made the boxer an icon not just of sport but of a confident Black consciousness. In 1969, when the city of Algiers hosted a Pan-African festival, inviting Black politicians, poets, performers, artists and activists from around the world, it was Klein who got the gig to make a film of it. While there he also met Eldridge Cleaver, a spokesman for the Black Panthers. Klein made a portrait film of him, and half the profits from screenings in America went to the Panthers. There were movies about Little Richard, Hollywood, consumerism, America's 'military-entertainment complex', the political upheavals of May 1968, the Vietnam War, and more.

Although he was at the centre of so much, Klein never fully belonged, and he liked it that way. He was the remarkable fashion photographer who also made *Who Are You, Polly Maggoo?* (1966), a deeply satirical feature film about the fashion world. He reinvented documentary photography without really caring what documentary photography was. He was on the fringes of all the key movements in 20th century culture, from Pop and Situationism to Cinema Verité and the French New Wave, but he never fitted into any of them. All rules could be broken or just ignored.

Klein worked at such a pace that he was over three decades into his career before he ever looked back. In the 1980s, French TV commissioned *Contacts*, a short film in which he discusses his process by examining his own contact sheets. Why was this frame chosen for publication and not another? How did a situation evolve from shot to shot in a sequence? This film, coupled with the fact that the world was finally catching up with his achievements, led Klein back to galleries and museums, making grand survey shows and smaller exhibitions focused on single projects. These exhibitions and accompanying books consolidated his status while he pushed on with new work: an extraordinary film based on Handel's *Messiah* (1999); more fashion; a book about the cultural and political tensions in his home city of Paris; a return to photographing New York.

There are still untold depths to discover in William Klein's archive, whole bodies of work that have barely been seen. Of course, when an artist dies there is a rush to define their work, but in Klein's case we ought to resist that. I suspect it will be a while before the full extent of his vision is known. **BJP**

David Campany is curator-at-large for the International Center of Photography, New York.







A wide lens meant he had to be up close to fill the frame, not hanging back, invisible. There is a deep ethic in this kind of interaction, and it chimes with image-makers today who grapple with the often-awkward power relations of the camera. Klein was simply upfront about what was happening – and you could see it



#### Further viewing

*William Klein: Yes* will be published by Thames & Hudson in early 2023, with a career-spanning essay by David Company.  
[thamesandhudson.com](http://thamesandhudson.com)



## Any Answers

### Brett Rogers

Interview by Izabela Radwanska Zhang  
Portrait by Jannell Adufo

**Brett Rogers OBE was born in Brisbane, Australia, in 1954. In 1980, she moved to London to study at The Courtauld. After 20 years – from 1985 to 2005 – as deputy director of visual arts at the British Council, she became director of The Photographers' Gallery, London, the first public gallery dedicated to photography. Under her leadership, it developed an international and inclusive exhibition programme, established youth and digital schemes, launched the outdoor Soho Photography Quarter, and has grown the reputation of the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize. After 16 years at the helm, Rogers steps down at the end of the year.**

**As a teenager growing up in Australia in the 1960s, I became excited by photography through reading UK fashion magazines.** Nova, with its innovative design and commitment to unmasking women's issues; and Vogue, which celebrated the famous East End trio – Bailey, Duffy and Donovan – alongside Peter Knapp, Ronald Traeger and Saul Leiter. Their reinvention of what fashion photography could achieve led me to discover the wider field.

**Working for the Australian Gallery Directors' Council [1976–80] was an unrivalled opportunity to develop my skills in exhibition organisation and curation.** I can see now how fortunate I was to also learn on the job.

**I moved to London because I missed the intensity and rewards associated with academic research.** When I discovered the cultural diversity and richness of this city, I simply had to stay.

**I look back at my time at the British Council with great gusto.** I joined at a period when what it did truly mattered. It was before the fall of the Berlin Wall, when presenting exhibitions of British art and photography in the Baltic states, Hungary, Romania, then Czechoslovakia and East Germany really counted for something and influenced lives – and perceptions of Britain.

**I recall an argument we had with an ambassador who wrote to say that we couldn't possibly show Martin Parr's *The Last Resort* in his country.** Picturing rubbish on New Brighton Beach was, 'not the sort of image Britain should be promoting abroad'. But we did. We weren't the British Tourist Authority so the photographic culture we promoted was purposely selected to represent a very broad, diverse and critically engaged response from artists.

**I react strongly against the 'uniform' of the art world.** The unrelenting black and the preference for certain designer labels. I find it hard to understand how creative people aren't inspired to experiment with the clothes they wear every day but prefer to conform to the art world convention of dressing.

**The most ambitious photographic project I undertook, which I feel will stand the test of time, was *The World In London*.** It was shown outside, along Oxford Street and Victoria Park, during the Olympics. I commissioned 204 photographers to make a portrait of a Londoner who was born in one of the 204 countries participating in the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

**One of the best ways to relax is visiting other galleries.** In London, I love the way the Wellcome Collection marries science, moving image, archives and contemporary art. Since it reopened, I have enjoyed nearly everything I have seen at Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery. Further abroad, the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart, Tasmania, is always full of surprises due to the very particular approach of its founder, David Walsh. And in Sydney I always enjoy White Rabbit, the gallery established by collector Judith Neilson to show superbly curated shows of Chinese contemporary art.

**The biggest challenge for galleries today is staying afloat and remaining relevant to audiences.** We are facing one of the worst times economically, which will lead to a reduction in public funding at the same time as a cost-of-living crisis. We will need to be even more mindful of our audiences' capacity to support us – which is why at The Photographers' Gallery, we have extended our free-entry period: 5 to 8pm every Friday.

**I cannot bear the thought of not retaining my involvement in the photography world.** I am working on a new way to continue contributing, while not stepping on anyone's toes. I will need to learn new skills so I am not prepared to say exactly what it is yet. Watch this space. **BJP**

[thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk)







# THE PORT



TO TAKE A PORTRAIT IS TO EXCHANGE AND COLLABORATE. EVEN WHEN IT INVOLVES THE SELF, THE IMAGE IS MORE THAN A REFLECTION. OVER THE FOLLOWING PAGES, WE DELVE DEEPER INTO THESE THEMES WITH SASHA HUBER, SAMUEL FOSSO, KALPESH LATHIGRA, EVA O'LEARY, ANEESA DAWOOJEE, GENESIS BÁEZ, JIALIN YAN AND ANNE VETTER

# RAIT ISSUE







TURNING HIS POLAROID  
STUDIO EXPRESS CAMERA ON  
A WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS,  
**KALPESH LATHIGRA** USES  
THE MOST UBIQUITOUS OF  
PORTRAITS – THE PASSPORT  
PHOTO – TO INTERROGATE  
THEMES OF HIERARCHY,  
CELEBRITY, RACE AND  
HUMANITY THAT UNDERPIN  
PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY

WORDS BY **GEM FLETCHER**

# IDENTITY POLITICS







Stashed in a drawer or tucked into the back of one's wallet is the most ubiquitous portrait of all – the passport photograph. In the UK, a small-sized photo is required for a driving licence, a passport, age identification to buy alcohol, to open a bank account or to go to school. While its primary function is to confirm one's identity according to a tight set of binary categories, the most pertinent questions surrounding the image are not about the individual in the photograph but the very portrait itself. What is the relationship between identification photography and the right to freedom? How do these portraits cultivate concepts of nation, belonging and access? How do they define who we are and how we live?

Kalpesh Lathigra has been meditating on these questions for the last decade in a body of work called *A Democratic Portrait* – an interrogation of “the one photograph that we all have”. The series contains over 50 passport photographs of cultural figures, politicians, refugees and individuals from marginalised communities, as well as the London-based artist's friends, family and peers. For Lathigra, the project is about presenting an egalitarian vision of humanity, while confronting ideas around visual literacy and how images are used to assert value and hierarchy. And yet, the project continues to unravel into a broader study of portraiture, power and the changing dynamics of photography itself.

An assignment in 2013 from the United Nations to document the Za'atari, a refugee camp in Jordan taking care of Syrians, was the experience that sparked the beginning of *A Democratic Portrait*. “I'd always been working with NGOs,” says Lathigra, who was a photojournalist at the time. “Back then, I was beginning to question how I take pictures, what images of refugees mean, and how they are used and read. Documenting hard news was my job, but I had no control over the usage, and it was an issue for me that images could be used as propaganda. As photographers, our subjectivity is critical and realising this eventually pulled me away from photojournalism.”

Lathigra returned to Za'atari multiple times taking a Polaroid Studio Express – a simple four-lens camera used to take UK passport photos. He began making portraits of refugees in an attempt to expose the privilege and inequalities deeply ingrained in photo IDs – highlighting how human rights and freedom of movement are intrinsically tied to race and country of origin. While Lathigra's primary line of inquiry was rooted in the politics of the state, the project marked the beginning of a transition in his practice from classic photojournalism to contemporary documentary. As his intentions shifted, new approaches emerged. In *A Democratic Portrait*, the camera becomes an access point, while the photograph unlocks the sociopolitical implications of our relationship to the medium as individuals and society.

Around this time, Lathigra pivoted into portraiture. When he worked on editorial assignments, he was intent on making more of the commissions and began taking the passport camera with him. At the end of every shoot, he reserved a little time to make a photo of willing sitters. “Photojournalism was changing,” he says. “Magazines no longer had the budget to send photographers away for months at a time to make an in-depth photo essay. Pivoting to portraiture was about survival.” He adds: “I wanted to offer my clients something different, but I also realised taking a great portrait of someone was not enough for me. I became an artist because I wanted to impact [social] change in one way or another. As a photojournalist, I had this rose-tinted view of changing the world – but it didn't happen like that. These ideas about the portrait and its role in society matter. For me, if the audience is asking questions, then I'm doing my job.”

The first celebrity Lathigra made a passport photo of was Joan Collins [page 52]. She agreed as long as she could have time to prepare. With her smoky eyes, red lips, bare décolletage and soft black curls falling around her face, the image bears an uncanny resemblance to Andy Warhol's 1985 Polaroid portrait of Collins. “She took control,” says Lathigra about the picture. “She knew exactly what she was doing.” Sittings with former PM Tony Blair, and music stars Mark Ronson and Lykke Li quickly followed, and soon magazines began requesting a passport photo as part of their commissions.

After the experience with Collins, Lathigra paid close attention to how individuals would code-switch depending on which type of image he was making. “In a typical portrait set-up, it's a theatrical moment of being photographed,” he explains. “Even if I try to break that down with rapport, it's very difficult. If you're a person of prominence, you're trained to act a certain way in front of the camera. When you pull out this weird contraption [Polaroid Studio Express] they understand it's a passport camera. They know to stay still and look directly into the lens. Most people don't smile. They take on a very different visual nuance in the way they perform. [Radiohead's] Thom Yorke was the only person beyond Collins who challenged this dynamic – [in one pose] his hand came up, covered his eye, and created an entirely different image.”

## Face to face

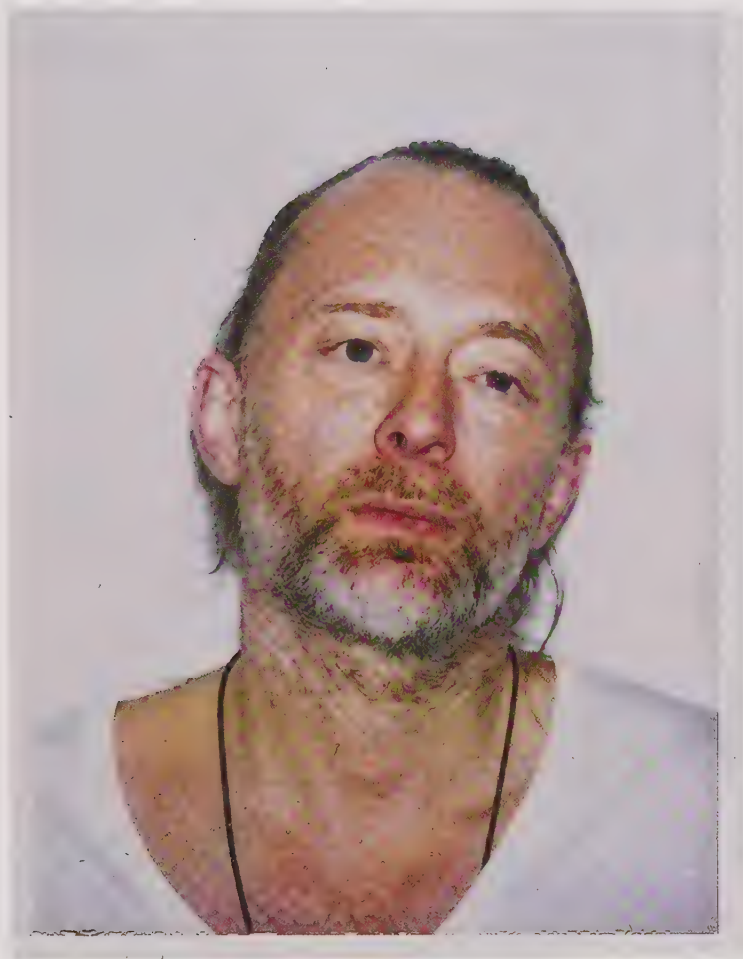
In *Listening to Images*, the scholar Tina Campt writes, “Even in the most constrained formats of photography – like the mugshot, the ethnographic image, the passport photograph – there is some enactment of a persona”. The sentiment is alive in Lathigra's images, from the tilt of the head and a sly smirk to a held jaw and piercing eye contact – these subtle gestures of world-renowned faces make these images captivating and relatable.

Lathigra felt it was important to include himself in the series too. His self-portraits [page 58] are a poignant rumination on the intersection of masculinity and ageing that often remains hidden in contemporary culture. A direct investigation of how we hold space, what we reveal and what we hold back. “It's important for me to be in the project if I'm asking all these different people to be open to the process,” he says. “But the self-portraits are difficult

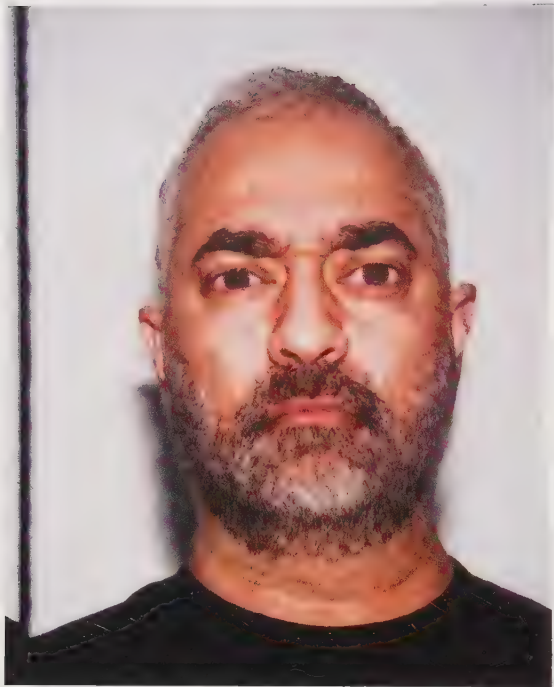














[to make] and hard to look at sometimes. It's a boundary I didn't think I would cross because of my vanity and ego. I have real difficulty accepting that I'm getting older, and it's something I don't think men talk about. Making these images has been about confronting myself."

Intentional nuance, multiplicity and contradiction make up the conceptual force of *A Democratic Portrait*. Lathigra allows ideas to overlap and entangle, building narrative threads that speak to the lineage of portraiture and its contemporary evolution. The project occupies space between Warhol's Polaroids and Luc Delahaye's *Portraits/I* while also being in dialogue with work such as Taryn Simon's *A Living Man Declared Dead* and Steve McQueen's *Year 3*, which centre on ideas of civic and national identity while interrogating notions of the individual and the collective, status and value.

For Lathigra, it was also vital to address how the rise of social media and the creator economy is reconfiguring portraiture in unexpected ways. "When I brought the passport camera into the editorial context, I was questioning social media, how the audience reads celebrity photographs and the democracy of picture-making in an era where everyone can take a good one," says Lathigra. "The power balance had shifted, and I wanted to talk about that. It was no longer just about how we control our image – in terms of how we look and want to be seen in the world – it was also about how these images of celebrities and influencers had become financial assets. What does this mean for the medium in five or 10 years?"

He continues: "If you think about the history of portraiture – the pictures of celebrities from the past, whether it's Eve Arnold's photos of Marilyn Monroe or Dennis Stock's of James Dean – there is authorship in their work. Instagram has changed that, and now celebrities have provenance." Today, it is more likely that the agent selects the photographer for a shoot, taking the decision away from the photo director on set. Often the photographer is also asked to release the image's copyright. "This is uncomfortable for me," says Lathigra. "I wanted to challenge this new realm of control by taking it away. In making this very direct, uniform image, the promise of the project was about equality – everyone being photographed the same way."

*A Democratic Portrait* is an assemblage of faces that unravels various ideas from identity, celebrity culture, and influence to freedom of movement, access, race and refuge. As a series, the project goes full circle. It subverts the terms of ID photography – to control, track and categorise people – and instead uses it to present a collective picture of humanity.

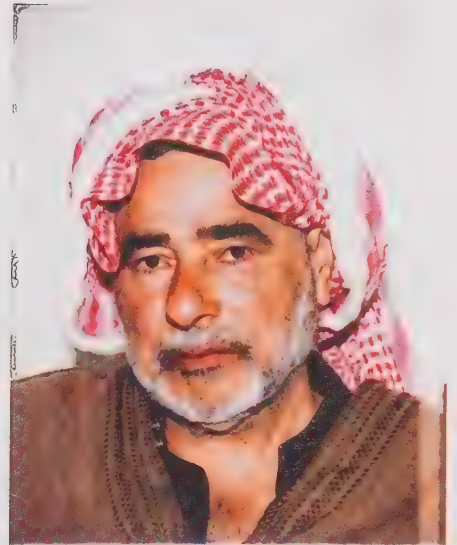
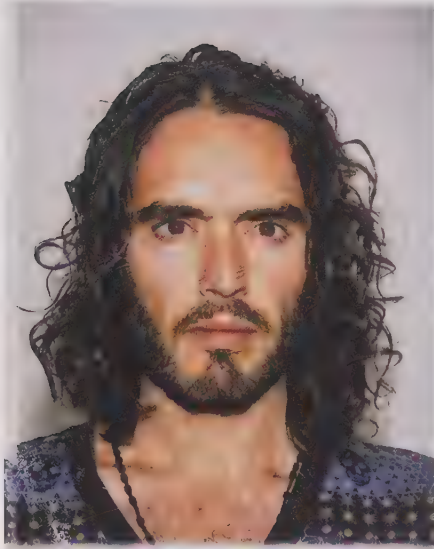
"On some level, who we are as human beings, and as a society, give prevalence or ascribe value – therein lies the democracy of passport photography," says Lathigra. "This project stems from my romantic notion that we are all a society. I'm still interested in the same ideas and stories [10 years later] because they matter. The threads that bind my work have always been to provoke the viewer to think about where they stand. It's a different world from when I started, and I think the full evolution is yet to come." **BJP**

[kalpeshlathigra.com](http://kalpeshlathigra.com)



















“WHEN I BROUGHT THE  
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**KALPESH LATHIGRA**







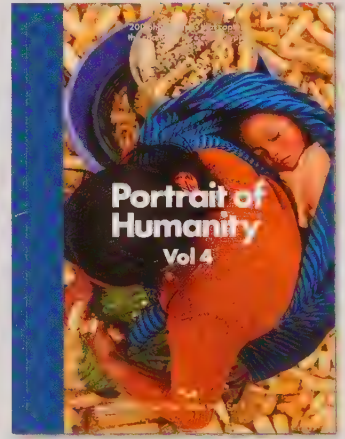
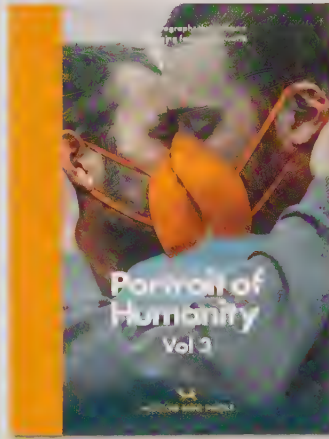
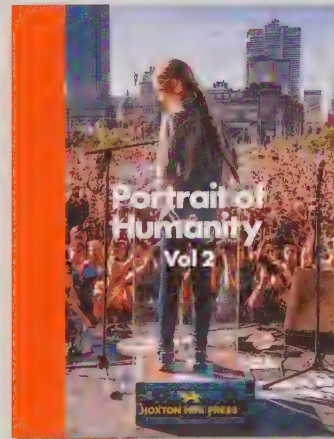




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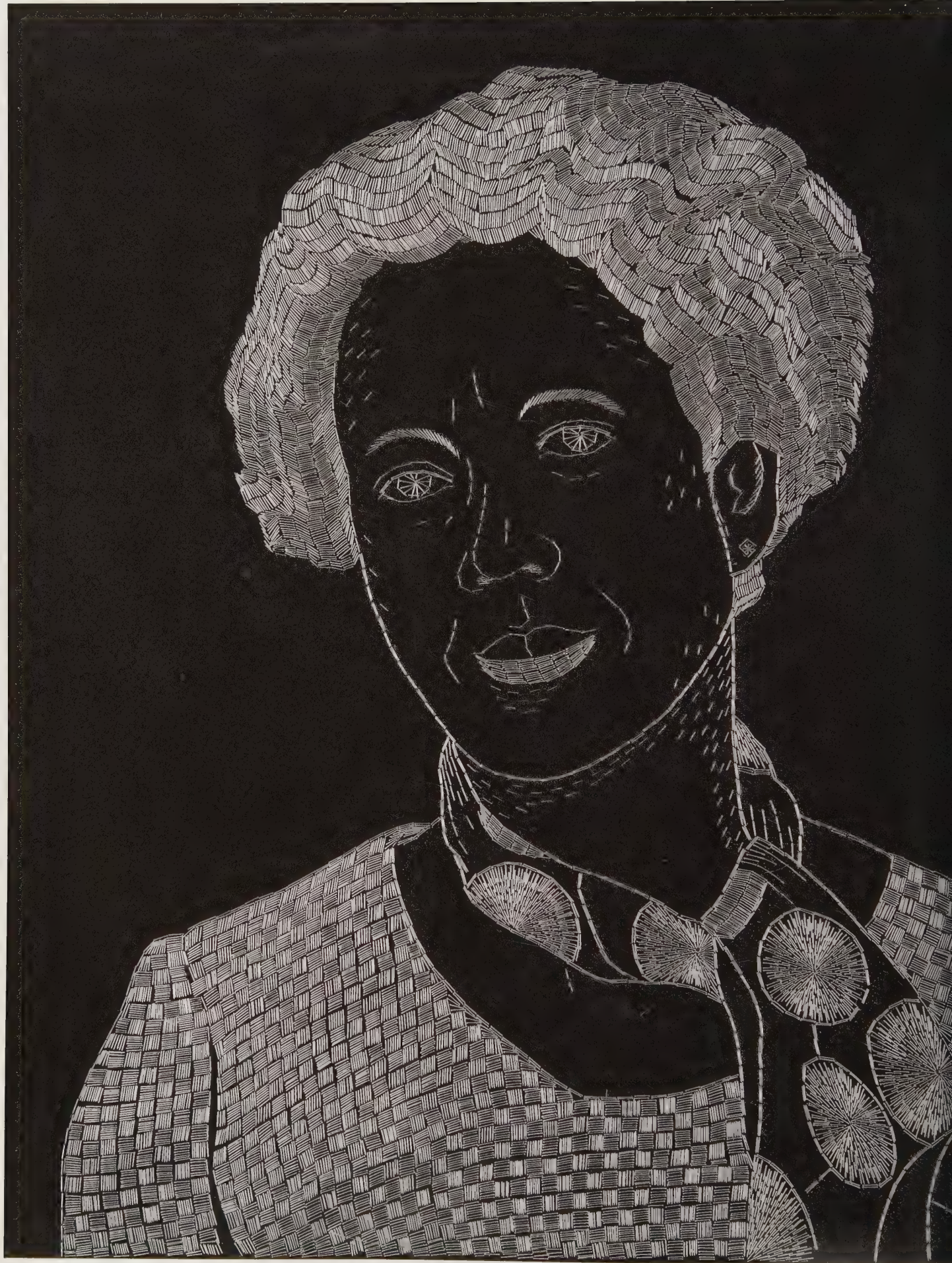


IN 2007, SWISS-HAITIAN  
ARTIST **SASHA HUBER**  
JOINED THE COMMITTEE OF  
DEMOUNTING LOUIS AGASSIZ,  
A CAMPAIGN SEEKING TO  
RENEGOTIATE THE LEGACY OF  
THE LAUDED SCIENTIST – WHO  
WAS ALSO A RACIST. AGASSIZ  
COMMISSIONED A SERIES OF  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF ENSLAVED  
PEOPLE FROM THE CONGO  
TO ‘SCIENTIFICALLY PROVE’  
THE INFERIORITY OF THE  
BLACK RACE. HUBER HAS  
CREATED COMPELLING  
DECOLONIAL WORKS BASED  
ON THESE PORTRAITS,  
REDRESSING SUCH ISSUES.  
AS THE WORK GOES ON SHOW  
AT AUTOGRAPH, LONDON,  
THE ARTIST DISCUSSES  
AGENCY, LEGACY AND THE  
HISTORICAL ARCHIVE IN THIS  
SPECIAL CONVERSATION  
WITH CURATOR **BINDI VORA**

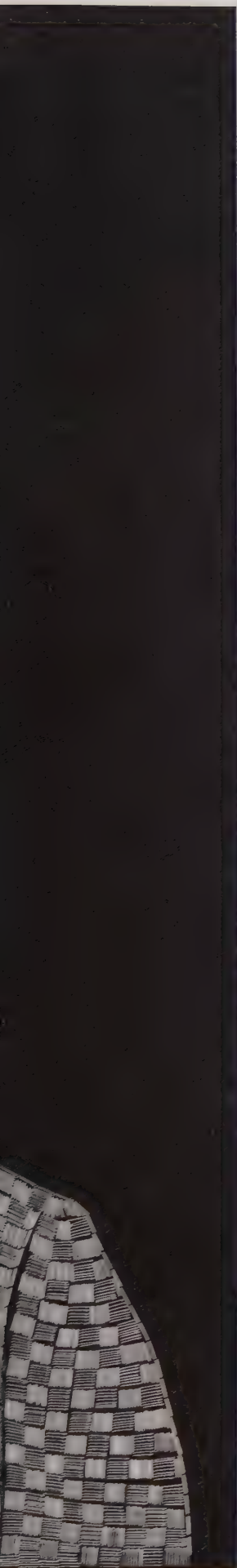
# TAILORING FREEDOM











Sasha Huber is a Helsinki-based visual artist. Her research-led practice encompasses multidisciplinary responses to archival material, often creating performance-based interventions through video and photography, and in collaboration with other artists and activists. Huber is known for her decolonial works centred around her Swiss-Haitian heritage and postcolonial realities more broadly. She often utilises a compressed-air staple gun within her practice – aware of its symbolic significance as an artistic ‘weapon’ – to renegotiate unequal power dynamics. Since 2007, Huber has participated in Demounting Louis Agassiz, a transatlantic committee seeking to raise critical questions and redress the cultural legacies of the Swiss-born scientist, naturalist and glaciologist Louis Agassiz (1807–1873). During his lifetime, the scholar pursued white supremacist theories and actively advocated for racial cleansing.

In this conversation, Bindi Vora speaks with Huber on the occasion of her first UK solo exhibition, *YOU NAME IT*, on show at Autograph in London, curated by Vora, Renée Mussai and Mark Sealy. They discuss the work of healing colonial wounds and how we might resist violent histories and [in]visibility to achieve liberation.

**Bindi Vora:** It is a huge pleasure to be in dialogue with you, Sasha, having spent so much time with your work and, of course, the privilege of co-curating your solo exhibition, *YOU NAME IT*, at Autograph. Your practice is deeply rooted in visual activism and particularly tethered to the Demounting Louis Agassiz campaign, which is where I want to begin. Can you tell us about the campaign and why you became involved?

**Sasha Huber:** Thank you, Bindi. My engagement with the campaign started when I read the 2006 book *Reise in Schwarz-Weiss: Schweizer Ortstermine in Sachen Sklaverei* by the Swiss historian and political activist Hans Fässler. His book was about Switzerland’s participation in the transatlantic slave trade; its banks and businesses profited from the plantation system in the Caribbean. This colonial history was never part of Switzerland’s school curriculum when I was studying.

I decided to contact the author, Fässler, to continue the conversation and introduce him to the decolonial artworks I had been creating. The 2007 activities commemorating the 200th birthday of Louis Agassiz celebrated his work as an influential naturalist and glaciologist but made no mention of the fact that he was



one of the most influential racists of the 19th century, nor the fact that he was an ideological forerunner of apartheid. This oversight prompted Fässler to initiate the Demounting Louis Agassiz campaign, which centres around a proposal to rename Agassizhorn, a mountain of the Bernese Alps in Switzerland – one of more than 80 landmarks named in Agassiz's honour. The new name he proposed was 'Rentyhorn' in honour of Renty Taylor, an enslaved man originally from the Congo who, alongside six other enslaved persons, was forcibly photographed on a South Carolina plantation. These photographs, often referred to as the 'slave daguerreotype series', are the first-known photographs of enslaved people and were commissioned by Agassiz to 'scientifically' prove the inferiority of the Black race. Fässler invited me to join the transatlantic committee alongside other activists, historians, journalists, artists and politicians.

**BV:** Do you think your involvement in the Demounting Louis Agassiz committee, as well your cultural experience, being both Swiss and Haitian, has informed the way you see the world?

**SH:** My dual heritage gave me a lot to think about and it also became the starting point and inspiration for my work. I was concerned about family and historical events, and I was able to articulate this through my work which helped me to make sense of myself and the world we live in. Interestingly, after joining the Demounting Louis Agassiz committee, I learned that history can be renegotiated and that I could contribute to this slow process with my art. Looking back, I see that as a key moment for me, which made me step outside of the studio and become more active, not just with my work but also in my desire to collaborate with others.

**BV:** We have touched on some of the experiences that you draw upon when making work, but I want to delve into the role of the archive within your research. You often turn towards archival imagery as a base material when making portraits of significant historical figures like we see in your series *The Firsts*. How do you settle on an image or a figure to work with?

**SH:** My interest in photographic archives started way back. At first, I was drawn to my family's archive. I especially admired the black-and-white portraits of my mother, Monique Huber-Remponeau, and her sister,

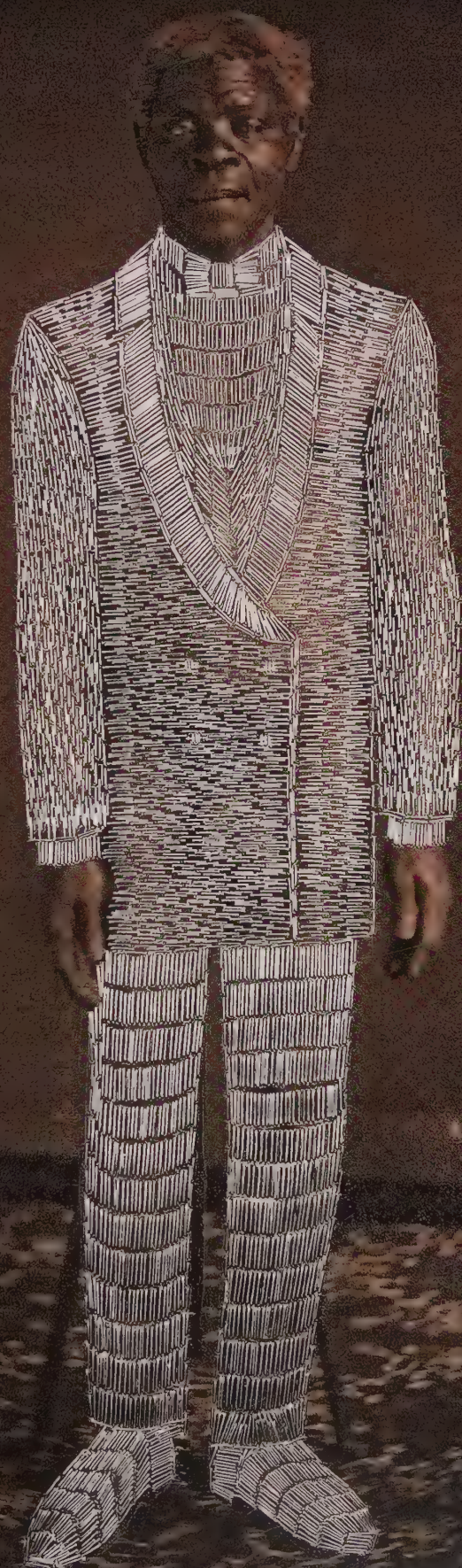
the early generation Black fashion model Jany Tomba, and my artist grandfather, Georges Remponeau, in New York, where the family emigrated to in the mid-1960s. Whenever I got a chance to look at the albumen prints, and boxes filled with photographs, I wanted to see and hear their stories. My mother would tell me about her apprenticeship at the Abraham photo studio during the mid-1950s in Port-au-Prince where she learned the skill of retouching portraits directly onto the ambrotype glass-plate negatives.

In 2004, I began the series *Shooting Back – Reflections on Haitian Roots*, criticising those individuals who contributed to the historical and social conditions in Haiti, from the 15th to 20th century. I began with a portrait of Christopher Columbus and went on to create portraits of François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier. This was the first time I was making portraits entirely rendered using metal staples 'shot' onto wooden boards. I wanted to use the staple gun to metaphorically but also literally 'shoot back' at figures like Columbus. At the time it gave me a sense of agency and the ability to react to an unjust history. Each staple represented a life lost to the transatlantic trade as well as those adversely affected by the autocratic regime in Haiti.

I soon felt that I wanted to use my energy to create portraits of our ancestors and people who had been silenced throughout history, who were – or still are – negatively impacted by colonialism; works that commemorate and memorialise. This was a turning point for me and henceforth my shooting of staples has sought to enact a stitching of colonial wounds. It was a way for me to make visible and tend to those wounds – I started to call my works 'pain-things'. Since then, I have made several portraiture series, such as *Shooting Stars* (2014–ongoing) and, as you mention, *The Firsts* (2017–ongoing).

**BV:** *Tailoring Freedom* (2021–2022) forms part of this ongoing advocacy work, addressing the disputed legacy of Louis Agassiz and the aforementioned daguerreotype images of seven enslaved individuals, including Renty and his daughter, Delia. The images were intended to give credence to Agassiz's white supremacist beliefs and 'prove' the inferiority of Black people. All seven of the figures are depicted unclothed on the Edgehill Plantation in South Carolina, USA. The original daguerreotypes (now housed at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University) have been the subject of many ongoing debates around authorship,









ownership and decolonial practices, especially as Tamara K Lanier – a descendent of Renty and Delia – has sought to repatriate the original photographs. Why was it important to you to create portraits of Renty and Delia to begin this work?

**SH:** I only found out about the daguerreotypes when I joined the Demounting Louis Agassiz campaign in 2007. When I started to work on my first reparative intervention as part of the campaign group's renaming efforts, I went to Agassizhorn to rename the peak – physically and literally – to Rentyhorn. I carried a metal plaque featuring an illustration of Renty, alongside a short description, all the way to the peak and documented the action. In addition, I made a petition website – [rentyhorn.ch](http://rentyhorn.ch) – and sent a letter of request to the mayors of the communes sharing the mountain in Grindelwald, Guttannen, Fieschertal and the Unesco World Heritage Committee.

In 2012, we received an email from Tamara K Lanier after her daughters discovered my petition. They came to an exhibition opening in Grindelwald held near the mountain to raise awareness of Agassiz's racist history where she spoke about Renty. She gave Renty his dignity back – emphasising his importance amongst their family and sharing with everyone what kind of a person he was: he could read, he taught his children, he was spiritual, and much more. It was moving to get to know her and we have stayed in touch ever since. When Tamara filed a lawsuit against Harvard University in 2019, she wanted to retrieve her ancestors' photographs from this powerful institution which, according to her lawyers, was still owning and 'selling' her ancestors through the reproduction of their portraits. As I understand, this action follows in the steps of enslaved people who pursued 'freedom lawsuits' to petition for their emancipation. Tamara's case was dismissed by the Superior Court in March 2021 and by the Massachusetts Supreme Court in October 2022. It was not a surprise, but still a disappointment. However, the court has permitted Tamara to pursue an 'emotional distress claim' against Harvard if she wishes. It is bittersweet news, and I don't know if she will proceed. I believe that her attorneys will stay committed to her and that they will continue to support her despite not being able to free Renty and Delia as she had hoped to.

**BV:** These works raise crucial questions about the ethics and politics of the gaze and how we might be able to look with sensitivity at such images. As we were

conceptualising the exhibition for Autograph, it was important from our perspective to draw focus onto the *Tailoring Freedom* portraits, situating the works in a contemplative space to further emphasise the need for reflection. In these new portraits you have merged multiple facets of your practice to create these works, using photography and your signature staple-gun method. You have managed to depict violence without reproducing violence and each portrait refuses the role of the objective camera. Can you speak about why this body of work has been significant in your practice and why the merging of these two mediums was important?

**SH:** When I first started the Rentyhorn project in 2008, I made an ink drawing of Renty dressed in traditional Congolese clothing rather than stripped bare, as the daguerreotypes depict. I recently revisited these sketches, having forgotten about them. Seeing them again, I realised that subconsciously I had already imagined freedom for them through my critical fabulation. *Tailoring Freedom* was conceptualised before knowing the outcome of the lawsuit. Now, after Tamara's unsuccessful efforts to gain her ancestors' freedom through repatriating the original photographs, I returned to this methodology and these initial sketches. Having spoken with Tamara about the case on several occasions, I decided that the final portraits of Renty and Delia should be gifted to her. I printed the photographs of Renty and Delia onto wood, mounting them as a diptych for them to stay together. It was the first time that I married stapling with photography as usually I create the entire image from staples. I came to think, yet again, how fine clothing can be a symbol for freedom, especially because it was something enslaved people could never have. When I started to research what kind of clothing I could 'tailor' for them, I started to look at images of the abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, both of whom were able to self-emancipate in their lifetime. Douglass' status as the most photographed person in the USA during the 19th century was also an important aspect. When I showed the work to Tamara, she said that I had successfully 'taken them out of their circumstance' and 'given them their dignity and humanity back'.

**BV:** These monochromatic works bring to life the haunting presences of the seven enslaved individuals and draw us into their gaze. In the two portraits depicting Jack and his daughter Drana [which appear on this issue's cover], you

Opposite: *Alfred*, 2022.

Pages 76–77: *Jack and Drana*, 2022.

Pages 78–79: *Renty and Delia*, 2021. Courtesy of Tamara Lanier

All images from the series *Tailoring Freedom* © Sasha Huber  
Original images courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

The works *Fassena*, *Jem*, *Alfred* and *Jack and Drana* from the series *Tailoring Freedom* were commissioned by The Power Plant, Toronto; Autograph, London; Turku Art Museum, Finland; and Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam, 2022.

## Further viewing

Sasha Huber: *YOU NAME IT* is on show at Autograph, London, until 25 March 2023, and has been curated by Renée Mussai, Mark Sealy and Bindi Vora. A hardcover monograph has been co-published by Autograph, The Power Plant and Mousse Publishing to accompany the exhibition. *YOU NAME IT* was initiated, organised, and circulated by The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, in collaboration with Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam; Autograph, London; and Turku Art Museum, Finland.



















"I SOON FELT THAT I WANTED TO USE MY ENERGY TO CREATE PORTRAITS OF OUR ANCESTORS AND PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN SILENCED THROUGHOUT HISTORY, WHO WERE – OR STILL ARE – NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY COLONIALISM; WORKS THAT COMMEMORATE AND MEMORIALISE. THIS WAS A TURNING POINT FOR ME AND HENCEFORTH MY SHOOTING OF STAPLES HAS SOUGHT TO ENACT A STITCHING OF COLONIAL WOUNDS. IT WAS A WAY FOR ME TO MAKE VISIBLE AND TEND TO THOSE WOUNDS – I STARTED TO CALL MY WORKS 'PAIN-THINGS'"

**SASHA HUBER**

made a conscious decision to clothe each of them as a gesture of reparation and dignity. Would you be able to share some insights into the inspirations behind the glimmering attire that has been so intricately and very beautifully woven using your signature air-staple-gun method?

**SH:** Delia and Renty are lucky that their descendants know about them and that they fight for their freedom. This is not the case for Jack and Drana, Alfred, Fassena and Jem. We don't know much about them, or if they have descendants. I felt it was important to collectively remember all seven of the figures from the daguerreotypes because they were a community. They knew each other. Now within this complete series they are all together, side by side. I've depicted Drana in a dress inspired by Sojourner Truth whose liberation history is remarkable; she went to court back in 1828 to fight for the recovery of her son from slavery and was the first Black woman to win such a case against a white man. During the making of this work, bell hooks' book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) was something I returned to. The title, *Ain't I a Woman*, is taken from a speech given by Sojourner Truth – one of history's most important speeches on abolition and women's rights ever given. It gave me a deeper understanding of the precarity of Black womanhood during slavery, the racism and sexism women were exposed to, and how this history affects our present time.

**BV:** What does it mean for you to have this collection of works displayed at Autograph, given our history of redressing archives and of bringing often unheard narratives to light?

**SH:** I have been acquainted with Autograph's work since 2010, so to see my exhibition come to life in the gallery space feels like a dream, like my work has come full circle in a way. *Tailoring Freedom* resonates especially strongly with Autograph's philosophy, I think. I'm incredibly grateful that I have been able to develop this series and bring together so many years of work and advocacy to the public to understand the embedded histories alongside a dedicated book, *YOU NAME IT*. It means a lot to me and I'm grateful to everybody who has supported me in this ongoing journey. **BJP**

[autograph.org.uk](http://autograph.org.uk)  
[sashahuber.com](http://sashahuber.com)





Above, top: *Somatological Triptych of Sasha Huber VII*, Agassiz Island, Lake Huron, Ontario, Canada, from the series *Agassiz: The Mixed Traces*, 2022. Commissioned photography by Daniel Ehrenworth

Above, below: *Somatological Triptych of Sasha Huber V*, Agassiz Lake, Quebec, Canada, from the series *Agassiz: The Mixed Traces*, 2017. Commissioned photography by Jake Hanna







A MASTER OF SELF-PORTRAIT, **SAMUEL FOSSO** HAS USED HIS IMAGE AND SHARP EYE FOR SARTORIALISM TO SPEAK TO PERSONAL TRAUMA, MOMENTS OF HISTORY AND A KEEN INVESTIGATION INTO NUANCED INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATION. AS A MAJOR TOURING RETROSPECTIVE OPENS AT HUIS MARSEILLE THIS MONTH, HE REFLECTS ON HIS LIFE'S WORK

WORDS BY **SARAH MOROZ**

# BECOMING SAMUEL FOSSO







Samuel Fosso brandishes his physique like a powerful instrument, with which he reckons with diaspora and postcolonial identity. The French-Cameroonian photographer's eponymous exhibition at Huis Marseille, on show until March 2023, is a continuation of the one that ran from autumn 2021 at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris. The new iteration retains the retrospective aspect of Fosso's robust five-decade career, but "bringing the same images to a new place obviously always brings its share of the unknown, with a different alchemy," Fosso notes. His work will fill the entirety of the Amsterdam museum with primarily large format prints: producing visuals at this scale accentuates the details he carefully envisions. In tandem, on another continent, the Princeton University Art Museum presents *Samuel Fosso: Affirmative Acts*, the first major US survey, on view in downtown Princeton until January 2023.

The main themes of Fosso's oeuvre include the psyche of selfhood and the multiplicity contained within each person, using a studio setting to implement stylised forms of representation. To date, some of his images are held within the collections of Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou and Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, among others. It is not insignificant that Fosso's image covers cultural historian Mark Sealy's book *Photography: Race, Rights and Representation* (2022), in which Sealy writes: "Our understanding of Africa is implicitly linked to, and cannot be separated from, the way we have been invited to see Africa", qualifying that this lens has mostly been "a meaningless set of contradictions, stereotypes and polarities". Fosso is one of the actors whose work has helped shift the marginalised view imposed by the European gaze, shifting outside perceptions from within the territory.

Fosso was born in 1962 in Kumba, Cameroon, to Nigerian parents of Igbo ethnicity. He grew up with his grandparents in Nigeria until the end of the Biafran War in 1970, eventually relocating to Bangui in the Central African Republic with his uncle. Fosso was briefly an apprentice for a photographer (who mostly doled out menial tasks) before eagerly opening his own studio in September 1975 when he was just in his teens. After a day of shooting, any unused film designated for his clientele was repurposed for taking self-portraits.

Fosso's work is often equated with that of Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keita: all pillars of beautiful studio portraiture from the African continent (in 1997 the three were commissioned by Parisian department store Tati – located in Barbès, a neighbourhood where many African immigrants live – to recreate the African photo studio). But Nigerian curator and art critic Okwui Enwezor situated Fosso's work as more akin to

that of Pierre Molinier, the French self-portraitist who toyed with gender codes, and Yasumasa Morimura, the Japanese performer/photographer who places himself within iconic artworks. In a future-facing timeline, Fosso seems an indelible precedent to Omar Victor Diop and the idea of channelling the self to vehicle the past in a way that powerfully deconstructs stereotypes about African identities.

The selection of over 200 photos at Huis Marseille, spanning from the 1970s to today, was, "as exhaustive as possible by selecting what best embodied each period of my work," Fosso states. "It was important to cover the different aspects of my journey: each series of self-portraits is represented, and there is also a good overview of my work as a studio portraitist." He notes that the period from the 70s was the hardest to extract a selection from: "At that time, I didn't yet consider myself an artist; retaining, a posteriori, the best of this continuous flow was a very interesting challenge."

Although often a wholly independent actor, Fosso has also dabbled in collaborative endeavours. In 1999, he shot a 10-image autumn/winter editorial for *Vogue Hommes International* in his Bangui studio, and in 2021, he featured in an issue of *A Magazine Curated By* helmed by menswear designer Grace Wales Bonner [page 84]. The motivational thrust for these is underpinned by "un goût profond pour la mode" – "a deep love of fashion" – something that has been true for him ever since adolescence. For his contemporary collaboration with Wales Bonner, who situates her aesthetic as "European heritage with an Afro Atlantic spirit", Fosso fondly praised the dapper styling: "I wore the outfits proposed as naturally as I would have in any series."

### Overcoming trauma

Fosso's career and visibility grew over decades until he weathered the unthinkable in 2014: the destruction of his house and the looting of his equipment and archives. This "constituted a trauma from which I still have not recovered," he recalls. "The lost material, the violence of the event and the atrocities of the civil war [Biafran War] plunged me into a deep depression for which I had to be treated and whose consequences I still suffer today." After this excruciating experience he was forced to reinvent himself, while journalists, photographers and international organisations helped him recover the bulk of his negatives.

He refused to be defeated by this, however, saying: "My creativity has always been intimately linked to what I have experienced and I would say that the series SIXSIXSIX, which followed the atrocities of 2014, reflects the inspiration that I draw from the worst times of my life." These many hundreds of self-portrait Polaroids were made to represent the ecstatic and excruciating range life brings to the surface. The series, made in 2015–2016, presents an obsessive, repetitive, affirming study of states of emotion. "After these wars and all the hardships I have suffered," Fosso says, "I still have life, and photography helps me to continue on this path."

Asked if he considers his portraits to have a performative aspect given his preponderance for costumes,



This page and opposite: From the series *70s Lifestyle*, 1974–78

Page 88: *The Lifeguard*, from *Tati Series*, 1997

Page 89: *The Liberated Woman of the 70s*, from *Tati Series*, 1997

Pages 90–91: From the series *Mémoire d'un Ami*, 2000.

Page 92: From the series *Le Rêve de mon Grand-père*, 2003













Fosso is quick to reframe the manner in which he sees his work. "I want to clarify that I don't do theatre: I approach my work in an authentic way. What I mean by that is that I'm not 'acting'. Of course I play a character, whose story I want to tell for the duration of a shot, but the 'staging' aspect is not what I find most essential... When I pose in front of the lens, I really am this person that I embody." He negotiates between functioning as a conduit and relaying something autobiographical: "My body is effectively an intermediary, my face is only a mask, I am always 'behind' the subject," Fosso states. "But once the photo is taken, what we see there is the subject himself – the one whose story I tell. In the picture, it's him: it's no longer me. When I introduce someone, I become that person."

The blurring of the line between 'self' and 'other' even further is facilitated by the sartorialism shaping Fosso's aesthetic. "I decide very meticulously on each detail of clothing, so that it better reflects the story I want to tell," he says. But he adds: "I don't have a fetishistic relationship to the clothes I use during the shots. Most of the time, the costumes are rented or lent from specialised shops for the duration of the series". He cites the military costumes of his series *ALLONZENFANS* (2013) and the accessories for his 2003 series *Le Rêve de Mon Grand-père* [page 92] as examples of stretching his personhood and imagination through donning a soldier's uniform or a shaman's robes. "I return these costumes," he says, "just as I return to my own identity."

















**"MY BODY IS EFFECTIVELY AN INTERMEDIARY, MY FACE IS ONLY A MASK, I AM ALWAYS 'BEHIND' THE SUBJECT. BUT ONCE THE PHOTO IS TAKEN, WHAT WE SEE THERE IS THE SUBJECT HIMSELF – THE ONE WHOSE STORY I TELL. IN THE PICTURE, IT'S HIM: IT'S NO LONGER ME. WHEN I INTRODUCE SOMEONE, I BECOME THAT PERSON"**  
**SAMUEL FOSSO**

The exception to this act of 'borrowing' was the elegant made-to-measure cream-coloured garment he had fashioned by Gammarelli – the official tailor of the Pope, located in Rome, operational since 1798 – for his 2017 series *Black Pope* [page 98]. And, of course, the clothes he sported in his 70s-era series [pages 86–87] of debut studio self-portraits were his own: he bought them, or designed them, based upon what was trendy at the time among the youth in Bangui (which, in turn, was heavily influenced by the stylishly dressed iconic musicians of the epoch).

### **Bearing witness**

Fosso describes his current photographic practice as being prefaced by catching up on current events and news. Nonetheless, "My art is not political, I do not do politics," Fosso emphasises. His photographic act is "to bear witness to the past for current and future generations, to fill in the gaps in the communal narrative." He intends to transcend the "power games" of politics. "My work is more like that of a historian," he insists. "I speak about history." After committing to a theme when something stays with him, he creates precise lists of costumes, accessories, décor; he starts doing research and visiting archives to compare and contrast possible aesthetics and styles, examining different 'realities' from which to create his own *mise-en-scène*.

Asked if he would ever continue his signature 2008 *African Spirits* series [pages 82, 95–97] with a new set of icons – having already spotlighted Angela Davis, Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, and other prominent figures from 20th-century Black liberation movements with his personal twist – he admits: "It's funny that you ask me that question, because I'm thinking of ways to complete the series." He remains mum about further details: "I never talk about my projects in progress... I don't like to disclose my series in advance." Although deeply tethered to his origins, Fosso does not feel he folds into a specific community or territory, describing his approach as fundamentally global: "I can talk about China, Americans, Europeans as well as Africans."

Black representation is unquestionably important to Fosso, but he gravitates towards a more expansive view of what a representational paradigm can encompass conceptually. "While the question of identity is, in certain aspects, central to my work, I would like – in a utopian way – for the cultural sector and for humanity to rise above these questions," he says. "Each person has both so many indefinable particularities and universal aspects, which we all recognise in ourselves." **BJP**

[samueelfosso.com](http://samueelfosso.com)

### **On show**

Samuel Fosso is on show at Huis Marseille until 12 March 2023. The exhibition is organised in collaboration with the Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris) and the Walther Collection (Neu-Ulm, Germany) with support from the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne (Switzerland). [huismarseille.nl](http://huismarseille.nl)







Opposite: From the series *Emperor of Africa*, 2013

This page: From the series *African Spirits*, 2008



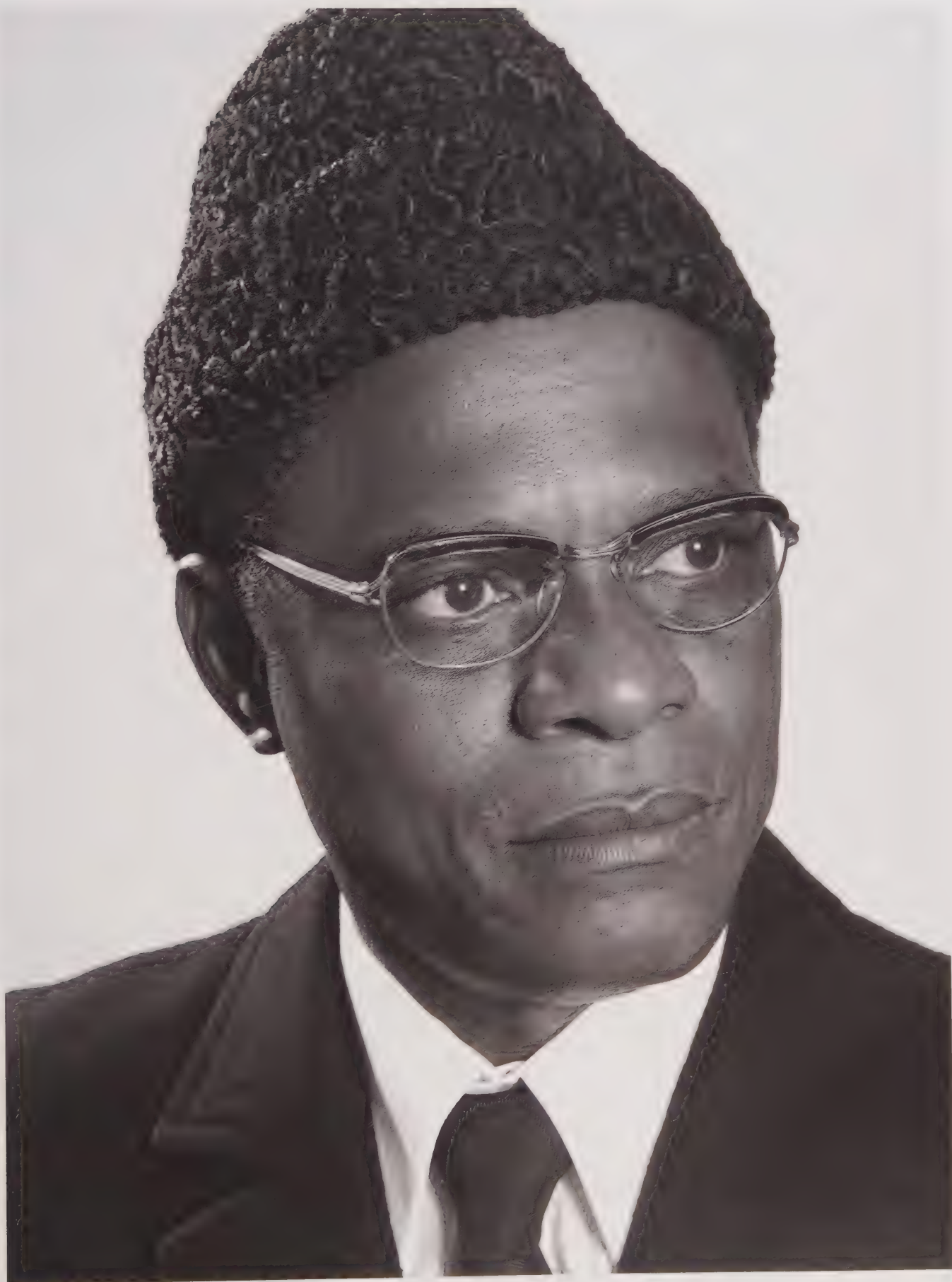




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Below: From the series *Black Pope*, 2017

All images © Samuel Fosso





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# OPEN WALLS

# Arles

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RECALLING HER OWN  
DISTURBING ADOLESCENT  
EXPERIENCES, **EVA O'LEARY**  
TURNED HER LENS ON THE  
YOUNG FEMALE STUDENTS  
IN HER COLLEGE HOMETOWN,  
ALLOWING THEM TO  
CHALLENGE THE SOCIAL  
EXPECTATIONS FORCED UPON  
THEM ON THEIR JOURNEY  
INTO WOMANHOOD

WORDS BY **ALLIE HAEUSSLEIN**

NOT  
A GIRL,  
NOT YET  
A WOMAN





Almost three and a half hours from the nearest major city, the town of State College, Pennsylvania – known locally as Happy Valley – is home to Penn State University, which has an undergraduate enrolment of around 80,000 students. It boasts the fourth-largest sports stadium in the world and the median age of its inhabitants is 22. “Everything revolves around students and the image of what Penn State is,” explains Eva O’Leary, who was raised in the college town. The popularised image is “a major football school in white picket fence America where everyone parties.” She pauses. “In reality, it’s more like *Girls Gone Wild*,” referencing the videotape and DVD franchise started in the late-1990s where young women – almost always intoxicated – were encouraged to expose their breasts or make out with one another on camera in exchange for free branded swag. “Growing up,” O’Leary recounts, “examples of femininity were really rigid and particular, and there was a lot of pressure to conform.”

When she returned to State College in her mid-teens after her parents’ year-and-a-half long sabbatical in rural Ireland – just as she was entering freshman year of high school – she was consumed by the cultural whiplash. “My friends were already going to college parties,” she remembers. “They insisted on giving me a makeover –

dress me in a push-up bra and borrowed Abercrombie clothes – with the goal of passing me off as a college student. I’d never really had alcohol before then.”

With tremendous vulnerability, O’Leary recalls being shown pictures taken on New Year’s Eve at a Penn State party with a disposable camera; a male collegian kisses her as she lays unconscious. “One of the memories that sticks out is feeling horrified and embarrassed by how bad I thought I looked in the photos,” she tells me. My heart sinks. “There weren’t a lot of adults looking out for us. And the town definitely wasn’t looking out for us either.”

### Camera and collaborator

After completing her graduate degree at Yale University in 2016, O’Leary found herself thinking about those pictures again, “about the impact a photograph can have and the idea of the camera being weaponised”. She was drawn back to State College, where she planned to make portraits of women returning home at night from parties. One evening, she set up on campus with the help of several students and “as I was describing the kind of women I was looking for, I realised I sounded like a predator,” she admits. She was unnerved and immediately stopped taking pictures for a time. “This was just one of the ethical crises in portraiture that ultimately led to [my series] *Spitting Image*, this sense that the power dynamic was really off and I needed to figure it out.” A folder of selfies she had made as a young teenager in Ireland, emailed to O’Leary by her father around this same time, also informed the project. “I saw how I was using photography to imagine how other people saw me, and then constructing my identity – or who I wanted to be – through the pictures. That was when I started thinking about how teenagers use cameras as mirrors.” With *Spitting Image*, she explains, “I wanted to see the town’s impact on that young adolescent group, to know if it was something I could see. But it was also an opportunity to figure out how to make a portrait where the person photographed had more control over the final image.” After presenting her work and conceptual interests to the art classes at her former high school, O’Leary invited young women students, with parental permission, to have their portraits made. She was taken aback by how many accepted.

In the barn behind her parents’ home, O’Leary built a giant, light-tight tent for her 8x10 camera. Clamped at the far end to a two-way mirror, the lens could see the sitter, but the sitter could only see their reflection. The large format camera enabled her to capture the subtleties of each girl’s face. “I set up an extension for the camera so I could photograph really close up. The shallow depth-of-field enabled me to focus on expression and render an extreme amount of detail.” She continues, “I also think there’s an intimacy to that perspective, the kind of intimacy you have when looking at yourself in the mirror.” O’Leary articulates the project’s goal succinctly: “When a girl sat down and looked at the mirror, I wanted her to decide how she wanted to look.”

By neither guiding nor dictating when the exposure would be made, O’Leary empowered each subject to control their representation. “Their sign to me that they









were ready was to stop moving. Only then would I focus the camera, put the film in, and make the picture.” Presented from the shoulders up, the resulting portraits are arresting. The subjects evoke unease, curiosity, self-assuredness, and everything in between through the quality of their gazes, posturing of their heads, and expressions on their faces. Clothing, accessories, hair and make-up vary dramatically, but what connects them all is the shared self-consciousness as they confront their reflections and struggle with how they should present themselves. Enveloped in her blonde, wavy mane, one pale-faced girl [page 100] – her forehead, cheeks and chin rosed by adolescent blemishes – stares straight into the camera. Her shimmering blue eyes are magnetising. Though she focuses on the lens, her expression conveys a distance, a looking-through rather than a looking-at. Asked why the backgrounds are blue, O’Leary replies: “I was obsessed with lapis lazuli and how it was originally a signifier of value in paintings because the pigment was so expensive. I was thinking specifically about the power and importance placed on images of women.” Ultimately, O’Leary

photographed over 100 female adolescents between the ages of 11 and 14: “It was a vulnerable thing for each girl to do and I felt grateful that I was allowed to witness it.”

### Girls just wanna have fun

After *Spitting Image*, O’Leary felt she still had not directly addressed the town’s culture. She revisited her teenage journals, “trying to remember what that time was like. At a certain point, I knew the university and its party culture were central.” This time, when she returned to the subject of her hometown and Penn State, she adopted a different approach. “Instead of just doing a shoot because I had a specific idea, I now knew it was far more important to have conversations and form relationships with the people I was working with.” One morning, as she was driving with a high-school friend, she serendipitously encountered three young women – in crop tops with vape pens in hand – trying to hitchhike. “Both of us immediately thought, ‘That’s what we looked like back then.’ We asked if they needed a lift. They were freshmen who had just arrived on campus and were heading to the



fraternities. I explained I was a photographer working on a project about being a young woman navigating this town and its culture. I told them to reach out if they were interested in being photographed." To her surprise once again, they did. For their first shoot, O'Leary went to the students' dorms to photograph as they were getting ready to go out at night. "I went with no real plan," she recalls. "Afterwards, I remember getting the film back and seeing so many pictures I was excited about. I realised that I needed to go into the next shoot with this kind of open mind, of not trying to control the situation, but being open to the ideas they had." In one triptych, the three women stand individually in their hallway, dressed in tight-fitting clothes that flatter their youthful physiques. Unlike the closely cropped busts of *Spitting Image*, these photographs communicate through both their subjects' faces and their body language. I am reminded of Judith Joy Ross' trio of swimsuit-clad prepubescents, faintly smiling, tentatively postured.

In arranging the next shoot, the young women eagerly cajoled, "You're going to be so excited!" When

O'Leary arrived, two of them proudly proclaimed, "We turned 18 and got tattoos!" One revealed the word 'Happy' on the inside of her lower lip, the other 'Valley'. In an image cropped tightly around their heads, they firmly grip their bottom lips to reveal the words in child-like all caps [opposite]. Their brown and green eyes shine like glassy jewels. The scene is unsettling. Literally bearing marks from the town, they celebrate their branding.

After determining she needed to live in State College full-time to make the project, O'Leary rented a home on fraternity row. While she continued to work with the same three women throughout their four years in college – "in a lot of ways they were my collaborators," she remarks – she also met and photographed other students. "I interviewed them, asking what experiences they thought were important to document, and worked with them multiple times." Her portraits are wide-ranging, from intimate views captured at close range in domestic spaces to throngs of women – dressed in Penn State apparel, White Claw cans in hand – as if staged for an advertisement [below]. They also include disconcerting black-and-white images,





evocative of surveillance footage. One photograph shows a group of women walking down the street from an elevated vantage point [page 110]. "I installed a motion-activated hunting camera in a tree in my front yard," she explains; a predatory undercurrent appropriately reverberates through the resulting pictures. The culture's deeply rooted history is emphasised through the inclusion of decades-old vernacular material, magazine clippings and snapshots that position women at the mercy of their male counterparts.

### The challenge of belonging

Over the years, O'Leary became close with one of her subjects. One day, as they perused pictures of her and her friends, the woman lingered over an image. "Looking back at that photograph of herself just a few years later, she felt like she was seeing a totally different person," O'Leary recalls. "She could see how hard she was trying and what she was dealing with in that photograph. And she said she was happy to have it." Though these portraits may not always conjure the 'time of your life' attitude promised of the college experience, they are honest, tender testimony to that stage in life when you

perform so many potential versions of yourself. They transcend the specificity of their environment, speaking to the universal challenge of growing into womanhood, of mimicking what you see worn, done and said around you to fit in, to belong.

Much of this work is stowed in O'Leary's cupboard in Hanover, New Hampshire, as she continues to think about the project's final form. The photographer eventually left Pennsylvania to teach at Dartmouth College. "It was something I had to make, but it was so emotionally taxing to work on," she confesses. "I don't think I realised that when I was doing it because I was so fully immersed in that place." She clearly continues to grapple with her adolescent experience, the ethics of representation, the power dynamic intrinsic to portraiture, and the form this work will ultimately take. "It's hard to fully communicate my experience as a young woman and the intensity of that culture. In many ways, I feel like language is never enough. I hope that these pictures can start to communicate some of that heavy feeling, of the air being thick." Sighing, she suggests, "It might all end up in my closet for another 10 years before I figure out what it's supposed to be." **BJP**

evaoleary.com













Page 100: *Leah*, 2017

Page 102 (top, left to right): *Cherry*,  
2017; *Hayden*, 2017; (below, left to right)  
*Grayson*, 2017; *Korell*, 2017

Page 104: *Untitled*, 2016–2020

Page 105: *Untitled*, 2016–2020.

Page 106: *Untitled*, 2016–2020.

Page 107: *Untitled*, 2016–2020

Page 108 (left to right): *Jill (Pinchot Hall)*,  
2017; *Sophie (Pinchot Hall)*, 2017.

Page 109: *Katy (Pinchot Hall)*, 2017.

Page 110: *Untitled*, 2016–2020

Page 112: *Ashley*.

Page 113: *Sophie*.

All images © Eva O'Leary.











*Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'self' as "a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others". What creates this essential being is, however, harder to define.

Perhaps, to coin an overused phrase, it is what 's inside that counts. Do our emotions, ideas and even our politics create our sense of self? Maybe how we appear to others – our clothes, our hair, the way that we speak – plays a role. Or is it external factors that define us? In a capitalist society, can our sense of self ever be truly divorced from the circumstances of our birth? If not, then perhaps our class, race, gender or the place we call home are the biggest factors to consider.

The most likely answer is that our essential beings are a combination of all of the above. Here, Owen Harvey, Jess T Dugan, Emma Hardy, Ayomide Tejuoso (Plantation), Annie Wang and Georgie Wileman offer their thoughts on the concept of 'self' as a component in their lives and work.

Introduction by Philippa Kelly

# Picture this: Self

## Owen Harvey

I took this image in 2016 for my documentation of the UK skinhead scene. I'd meet people and go for a walk with them, try and get a sense of who they are and then shoot images throughout the day. Some of those walks led to relationships, others would just result in the one shoot. I was interested in the skinhead scene and what that represented. I've always been interested in how people express their identity through their clothing and find their 'home' in their subcultural groups.

This portrait was on the final roll, near the end of the day. The next day, I flew to America and this shot sat at home unprocessed for three months. When I got back, this image stood out to me immediately. There's both strength and fragility in it – the bruised leg, cut knuckles, confrontation – and equally a sense of vulnerability.” **BJP**

[owen-harvey.com](http://owen-harvey.com)





## Jess T Dugan

I have always created self-portraits as a way to understand myself, my place in the world, and my relationships with others. Some of my earlier photographs asserted my identity as a queer and non-binary person, while my more recent self-portraits have taken on a different kind of interiority, exploring more expansive notions of personhood. As I age, I am increasingly thinking of my photographs as an archive of my own life, a documentation of myself exactly as I am at a specific moment in time, knowing I will continue to grow and change and evolve.

I made this photograph early in the morning in the bay in Provincetown, Massachusetts, a place that has been dear to me for the past 20 years. For just a moment, the clouds parted in front of me, and the sunlight poured through and illuminated my body against the darkened sky.” **BJP**

jessdugan.com



## Emma Hardy

As the photographer and the daughter and granddaughter of the two women appearing in front of my camera, I’m the third generation of women participating in this image. And to this extent, I consider it as a portrait of myself. My presence, my gaze, my reflection of my immediate female heritage is as close to a self-portrait as possible.

The intense intimacy is palpable. I’m intrinsic to it. I’m both mirror and reflection. My mother gazes at me as I gaze at her. There’s so much in this exchange: vulnerability, strength, resilience. I also recognise resignation – or is it acceptance? – in my mother’s eyes.

My mother was 80 at the time of this image. Ageing has challenged her and yet to the viewer, she is every bit as beautiful as she once was. She is grace and defiance. I see you and I see myself in you.” **BJP**

emmahardy.com



*My mother and her mother* © Emma Hardy.  
From the book *Permissions*, published by Gost Books

## Ayomide Tejuoso (Plantation)

**L** The image *Black dust; Blue thunder* is from my project *Black sex is forbidden; Black death is permitted*. It is an intentional study of my body and my relationship with Black femininity, depression and nihilism. Following my reflections on racism and the dehumanisation of the Black woman body, the image was a stop in time, a detailed archive of the pain I experienced as a young Black woman in the strain of Nigeria and the isolation of France." **BJP**

@plantationofficial





# Annie Wang

**I**n 2000, I was burdened with pregnancy pains and the fear of losing my sense of self, so I attempted to use art creation to preserve it. Starting from the first self-portrait taken in 2001 on the day before I was due to give birth, my son and I have taken a new photo together in front of the previous photo every time we've had a common life experience.

This picture is *The Mother as a Creator No 8: Making Dreams in 2011*. Here I photographed my expectations from a different angle, I let crisis become a turning point and my ideals take flight by working to achieve my dreams.

I have created 12 photographs for this project over 22 years now, and will continue the mise en abyme autobiographical approach. I hope I can reverse the stereotype that mothers must sacrifice themselves, and thereby help redefine motherhood." **BJP**

artanniewang.weebly.com



*The Mother as a Creator No 8: Making Dreams in 2011* © Annie Hsiao-Ching Wang



## Georgie Wileman

**L** *Pound for the Meter* is a documentation of my aunt and cousins, living in government housing and on the breadline in the UK. Julie lives with an intellectual disability, which her children have also inherited. I put a lot of responsibility on myself to accurately and respectfully represent my family's world, something that's made easier by Julie's unapologetically authentic presence of self.

I have never photographed someone who is so uninhibited and unaware of my camera before, or someone who has no real interest in seeing their portrait once it's been taken. It makes me smile every time I turn my camera to show Ju her photograph – the same indifferent 'Oh yeah, yeah' every time. I'm never quite sure if she's actually looked. Her honesty to self is so beautiful to me, unaffected by her surroundings, Ju remains Ju. As a photographer and Julie's niece, it's an honour to document her." **BJP**

[georgiewileman.com](http://georgiewileman.com)





**GENESIS BÁEZ, JIALIN YAN  
AND ANNE VETTER USE THE  
CAMERA TO CONSTRUCT AND  
REFLECT ON THE SELF, DRAWING  
ON SELF-PORTRAITURE BUT ALSO  
DOCUMENTING THE PEOPLE AND  
PLACES THAT DIRECTLY SHAPE  
THEIR UNIQUE IDENTITY**

**WORDS BY HANNAH GEDDES**



# SENSE OF SELF



The documentation of self has been foundational to photography. Evolving out of studios in the 19th century, early photographers including Louis Daguerre (1787–1851) took advantage of self-portraits to explore the camera's potential. The self-portrait has since become a staple of photography, led by artists such as Samuel Fosso [pages 82–98], Gillian Wearing and Zanele Muholi, who have turned the camera on themselves as an act of empowerment, performance or activism.

Portraits, in the classic sense of the word, are not the only way to represent the self through photography. Genesis Báez, Jialin Yan and Anne Vetter use the camera to explore their sense of self by making self-portraits, but also by documenting the people and places that shape who they are. This includes ruminating on diasporic identity, as Báez does in *La Luz También Viaja* (*Light Also Travels*). The book brings together work about her sense of belonging through depicting matriarchal bonds alongside places that remind her of Puerto Rico and the US. Yan records quiet moments in her project *Family Fragment* to rebuild closeness with her parents, work through past traumas and become at peace with herself. Meanwhile, Vetter photographs herself alongside their family and partner in *Love is not the last room* to understand their "own gender in my own body in relationship to the people who I love most". Vetter sees the project as "tides or waves" as it ebbs and flows, capturing different moments, spaces and places in time.

A sense of movement recurs throughout all three of these photographers' work. By looking at their images we might also find moments to reflect on our versions of self, the places and spaces we call home, and the people we surround ourselves with, the big and little things that make us, us. These artists expand what it means to portray the self through photography. **BJP**

**Portraits, in the classic sense of the word, are not the only way to represent the self through photography. The following three artists draw on family relationships, culture and environment to make sense of who they are**







# Genesis Báez

Born in Massachusetts and raised in the US and Puerto Rico, Genesis Báez reflects on her diasporic identity by photographing the women in her family, as well as people who remind her of them. Much of her work, such as the project *A Bridge of Mirrors*, is made in both countries, although particular places are not identified. "It's not geographically specific, but more about that lack of geographic space that is diaspora," she explains. Báez sometimes appears in fragments: a hand reaching to hold a rope or lifting a water container with her mother, bare feet, the sunlight bouncing off the water creating curves on the floor. In another, Báez's mother plaits her hair, their silhouettes multiplied, caught mid-plait [below].

Báez's images of people often start with "a premeditated gesture that feels symbolic in some way".

In one, four students from a Latinx sorority stand in a circle, hands resting on each other in a protective gesture of care [left]. In another, a girl whispers to her friend as she makes rings around the edge of a glass of water. "They reminded me of my family, we built a bond, and so we started making pictures together," Báez explains. Although she is creating images that relate to her family and identity, "not all of the people are related by blood, but one of the fundamental themes in my work is about visualising these invisible threads that connect people, through time and distance because diaspora is so much about dispersion". This movement and fragmentation recurs throughout the project. Báez comments that although "the images may feel a little fragmented, I see it as being somewhat akin to diasporic life as you're trying to make sense of your world, your language and yourself, through fragments." **BJP**

[genesisbaez.com](http://genesisbaez.com)





# Jialin Yan

Quiet moments and gestures can be found in Jialin Yan's project, *Family Fragment*. Yan's mother draws back the curtains in one image, her hand covering her reflection in another, or tenderly holding the artist's hand as she reaches over. The work was made in and around her hometown of Fuzhou, China, where she returned in 2016 after spending time in the UK. The images work through past traumas and unpack how the place that she grew up influences and contributes to the version of self that she is today. *Family Fragment* is about "how I deal with myself. This place where I grew up, the people around me, they shape me in a lot of ways. And if I can't face them, that means I can't face the past part of myself."

Yan also uses her camera to reconnect to her family. Growing up "I wasn't close to them because I was the only kid due to the one-child policy [in China] in my generation," she explains. "For a very long time I was far away from my family, both mentally and physically. I have always been rebellious and my parents are traditional

Chinese parents who focus on collective values... whenever I was with them, I always felt too self-assertive and we often had arguments."

After moving into her grandmother's home during the pandemic, Yan turned the camera on herself and her family. There's a quietness that is felt throughout *Family Fragment*: a singular car parked outside an apartment block, a dining room table surrounded by four empty chairs. Yan's mother and grandmother appear throughout the project, often in moments of reflection. In one image, her grandmother sits cross-legged on the bed, looking down in contemplation, while in another, her mother is captured resting her head on her hand as she looks over water. The camera records these moments, but also acts as a catalyst to start important conversations. "Once I started talking about this project with my mother, she started to unfold herself in front of me, sharing her vulnerable side – talking about her perspective on death and how she lost important people in her life. I feel like at that time, she was not only my mother, she was a daughter, she was a woman. She is everyone, she is the future version of me." **BJP**

jialinyan.com

All images from the series *Family Fragment* © Jialin Yan.







# Anne Vetter

All images © Anne Vetter.

In *Love is not the last room*, Anne Vetter turns the camera on herself and those around them to look at the fluidity of identity, alongside the intimacy and playfulness of their family and loved ones. The project began with a focus on leisure, space and time, but as Vetter continued to shoot, "I realised that the work was so much about queerness in my family," they explain. "What's a queer relationship with a parent or with a sibling?" In one image, we see Vetter's father and brother exercising in the garden. Caught in motion, their bodies are tense, faces looking down in concentration. "I became really interested in how my dad was forming his sense of masculinity, his sense of gender, his sense of 'straightness'. And how my brothers and mum do the same."

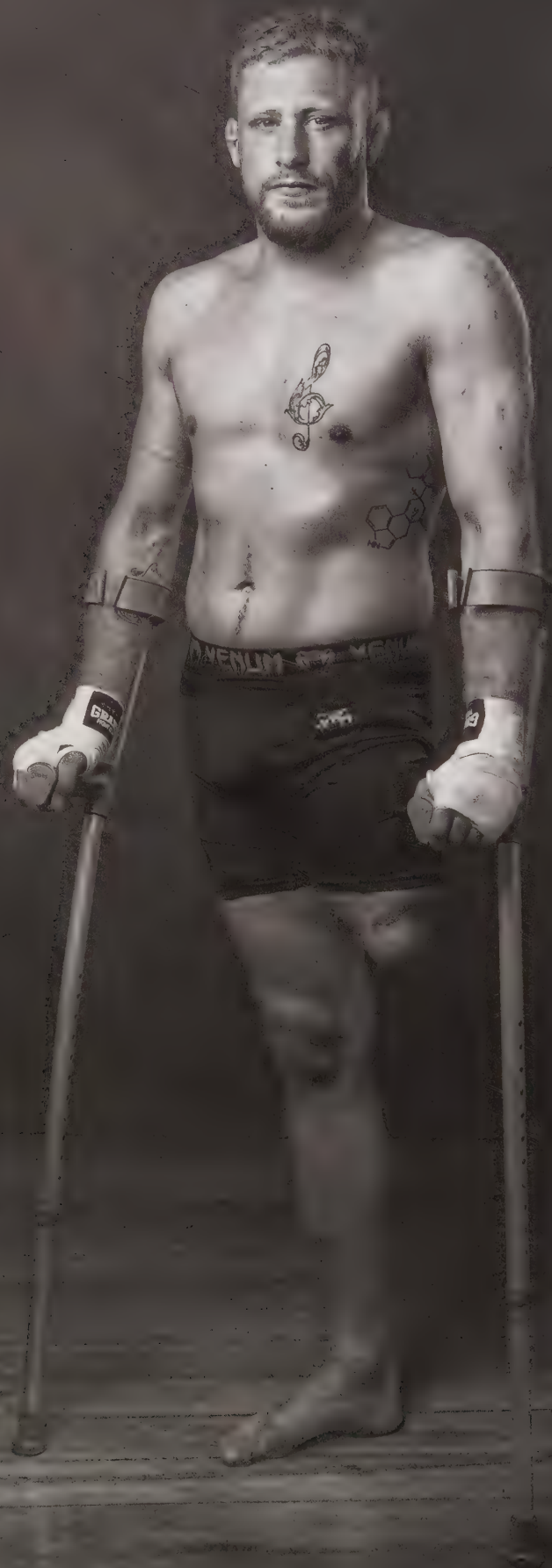
Vetter's brother Douglas plays a key part in the project. He is portrayed alone, with their father or with friends. Since 2020, Vetter has been making "self-portraits, with him as me". In *Self Portrait, Self Portrait as my Brother Douglas* [opposite, top], an image of the artist and their brother are paired together. They are both wearing a Star of David necklace, posing the same with tilted heads holding our gaze. Vetter is wearing a white T-shirt, while Douglas is topless. Vetter's hair is long, falling down their back; Douglas' is short and wavy. "I was pretty certain that he was representing this part of me that I would never see because I'm gender fluid. But the more that I've made the work, the more [I see] Douglas as me, the more I become ambivalent [to it]: what does this actually mean about what I want?" Vetter uses the camera to understand and reflect on self-representation and aspiration, alongside those around them. Looking back on these images has encouraged them to question "how I actually want to see myself". **BJP**

acvetter.com









**ANEESA DAWOOJEE CONNECTS  
WITH THE MARTIAL ARTS  
COMMUNITY IN SOUTH LONDON,  
DISPELLING THE STEREOTYPES  
OF FIGHTERS WITH PORTRAITS  
THAT ILLUSTRATE LIVES OF  
RESILIENCE AND VULNERABILITY**

**WORDS BY ALICE FINNEY**

# FIGHTING CHANCE



Page 130: James.

Page 132 (top, left to right): Celia; Reon  
(below, left to right): Dylan; Louis

Page 134 Shanelle

Page 135: Ricky

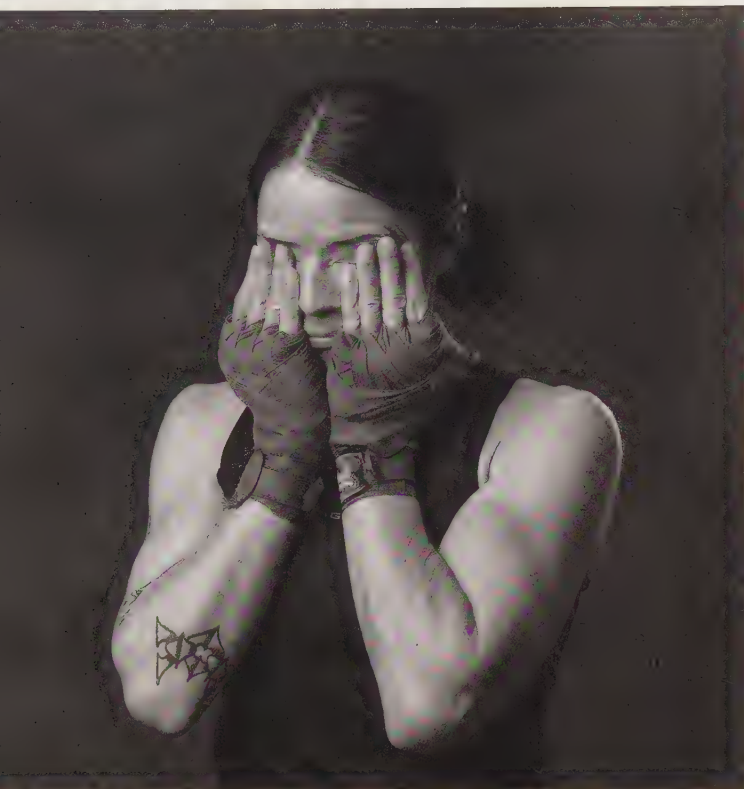
Page 136: Kerone, The Humble Warrior

Page 137 Nesime

Page 138 Liam

Page 139 Escuando

All images © Aneesa Dawoojee



Minutes away from the centre of Croydon – a town in the south London borough of the same name – lies the SN Combat Academy, a martial arts school run by coach Sam Nankani. Amateur and professional kickboxers from varying backgrounds gather here to train in Muay Thai. Nicknamed the ‘art of eight limbs’, the full-combat sport focuses on kicking, punching and clinching techniques to strike an opponent for points. The practice requires an unbridled commitment to its intense, discipline-led training. It is here, between the centre’s sweaty walls and boxing rings, that Aneesa Dawoojee began to create her latest series, *The Fighting Spirit of South London*.

Taken over the past few years, starting in 2019 – during what Dawoojee describes as the period “pre- and post-George Floyd” – and moving on to other locations, the style of the series sits somewhere between portrait and documentary. Each velvety image offers a glimpse into the life of its subject. It mostly frames a Muay Thai fighter from the waist up in a different pose; hands in soft prayer, fingers clasping a necklace or arms loosely crossed. “I have such an interest in documentary work and that’s where the crossover is,” Dawoojee explains. “I feel that there’s a history in all of us.”

Dawoojee hopes to illustrate the many faces of the martial art, from hijab-wearing women to heavily tattooed, muscular men. The series includes 21-year-old award-winning fighter Shanelle [page 134], pictured with an uncompromising look set into her features, cradling a photo of her late best friend. South London-based personal trainer Louis [page 132] gazes into the distance in an image that pays tribute to his mother, who ran professionally for Great Britain. “Each portrait is about an individual. They can be of any race, colour, size, age, but what I’ve tried to do with this series is connect each one in some way,” says the Mauritian-Trinidadian photographer.

Dawoojee has been practising Muay Thai since her teens, and for 13 years worked with children and teenagers with mental health challenges. In the hope of finding diverse subjects for her photographic work, she began to shoot fights at the local gym centre, where her son would train. From the outset, she wanted the work to be used to educate – a social commentary on the unseen lives of Muay Thai fighters in London. Muay Thai not only preaches consistency and commitment, but also empowers and instils confidence, especially in young people. “It teaches discipline and the appropriate way of looking after and

defending yourself safely, which a young child is not going to learn in the classroom,” she explains. “Equally, it’s such an empowering thing for young girls to be doing.”

It was important that these qualities were reflected in the series. “I needed to make sure that [the subjects] were the right kind of advocates if I am to use the work as an educational tool to support young people,” she explains. “The stories have to be ones that can resonate with people.” She cites Reon Wong [page 132] as an example of such an advocate. Now a professional fighter, Wong spent his teenage life unable to break a cycle of “darkness and negativity” before being introduced to Muay Thai. In his portrait, Wong stands proudly confronting the camera; a stance that highlights his confidence and commitment to the art form.

Dawoojee’s photographic process was a lengthy one. She spent time getting to know her subjects and each of their stories. “Building a relationship is slow and it takes time,” she says. “I need to trust them too: I’m not taking advantage of anyone’s story so there was a lot of discussion.” This slowness provided Dawoojee with the opportunity to capture the private moments, quiet determination and honest gestures of fighters. Her patient approach also echoes a question that lies at the heart of her work: how can we capture vulnerability without encroaching on a sitter’s personal boundaries?

The series is mainly shot in black-and-white: an attempt to represent the individuals in the simplest way possible. Every sitter was asked whether they would feel comfortable wearing a T-shirt or having their skin exposed. “I believe the human body will tell you so much more than the face; the body tells you a thousand things,” she says. “Going from black to white means the focus is on their humanity.” This is also the reason why the series is photographed in the style of traditional portraiture in the locker room, away from the bustle of the fighting ring to achieve that “quietness”. “The storytelling part is private – you can’t have an audience listening in,” she explains.

*The Fighting Spirit of South London* serves as an antidote to the traditional ‘fighter’ stereotype, which Dawoojee believes is often reduced to caricatures in Western media. Instead, it offers a more accurate portrayal of the “small voices” within the sport. “People just assume that because they’re in the ‘fighting’ world, they’re aggressive and that they might not necessarily have much to contribute to the community,” Dawoojee explains over a video call from her home in south London. “But I feel it’s the total opposite.”

The resulting images are profound in their intimacy and invite intense speculation. Perhaps one of the most arresting is *The Humble Warrior* [page 136], a fighter ready for combat but happy to remain seated and resolute in his own body. Also featured is Grenfell firefighter Ricky Nuttall [page 135], a defiant portrayal that captures the emotional grey zone between resilience and defeat. Dawoojee’s search for authenticity allows her to showcase the breadth of Muay Thai fighting life. With a chronicler’s eye, she captures the many facets of this little-explored community and sheds light on the complex emotions that come with taking part in the discipline. **BP**

[aneesadawoojee.com](http://aneesadawoojee.com)





















**Presented by *British Journal of Photography*, this year's Portrait of Humanity award winners confront complex emotions, acknowledging mid-pandemic pain, documenting post-pandemic joy and dispelling the shame and mystery of miscarriage**

# POH

**Portrait of Humanity**



Hope. Mourning. Resilience. Pain. Compassion. Guilt. Each of these emotions, though complex and changeable, is a meaningful part of the human experience. And in a time of ever-increasing societal, political and economic turmoil, the need to engage with and process each of them has never been greater.

Presented by *British Journal of Photography*, Portrait of Humanity celebrates photographers who display strength and courage in confronting these emotions, producing work that explores what it truly means to be human. The projects of Volume 4 Series winners Jonathan Liechti, Florence Babin-Beaudry and Claudia Gschwend exemplify these qualities, laying bare intricate emotions with nuance and precision.

"It is an invitation to look closer, to develop a more differentiated understanding and to reflect on the various issues," says Jonathan Liechti. "How do we as a society deal with death? What are the consequences of pandemic measures on the dying process? How do we protect the most vulnerable? Who works in this field?" Liechti is reflecting on his winning body of work, *What happens when we die?*. Created in November 2020, during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the project interrogates the professions surrounding death, focusing on the physicians, chaplains, undertakers, crematorium staff and sextons who were tasked with facilitating loss on a devastating scale.

Despite the difficult nature of the topic, Liechti's work is unflinching in its portrayals. His images are stark and clinical, offering an insight into the pressure which for many was – and for some remains – the reality of daily life. "In our society, care professions are not sufficiently appreciated," says the photographer. "This can be seen, for example, in their salaries. But without these people our society would not function."

While Liechti's work considers a much-discussed societal concern – the poor treatment of those entrusted with our most critical care – fellow Portrait of Humanity Series winner, Florence Babin-Beaudry, explores a topic still often confined to the shadows. Despite the 23 million miscarriages that occur annually worldwide, the experience remains, the photographer says, both neglected and misunderstood.

Babin-Beaudry's project began after experiencing her own miscarriage when, feeling the need to express herself, she was seeking ways to channel her emotions. "But after doing some research," she says, "I realised how taboo this subject is and how it affects women in so many ways." Babin-Beaudry's winning series, *Products of Conception*, works to reframe this experience, which all too often remains shrouded in mystery and shame.

The photographer's carefully staged portraits, which pair women who have experienced miscarriage with fruits or vegetables representing the size of the foetus at the time of loss, speak to distress, longing and to the violent bodily reality of miscarriage. "Despite the fact that this loss is common, the silence around it persists," Babin-Beaudry reflects. "I hope my series will make women feel empowered and beautiful rather than ashamed."

Power and beauty can also be found throughout the work of Series winner, Claudia Gschwend. The photographer's project, *Artists of Sencirk*, shares ties with that of Jonathan Liechti – both were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic although in different ways.

In September 2020, a friend of Gschwend's was working at a circus charity when they had an idea. The charity was shipping a container of donated equipment to a circus school in Dakar – would Gschwend like to document the process? Although she immediately said yes, due to Covid-19, the photographer's arrival in Senegal was delayed by a month.

When Gschwend eventually reached Sencirk circus school, she found a community of 30 artists built on resilience and strength. Founded by Modou Touré, a circus artist and former child beggar, Sencirk offers disadvantaged young people the opportunity to gain self-confidence in the dynamic context of the circus. "It's a group of young people working through shared trauma who are strengthened by their potential to overcome it together," she explains. Gschwend's images of these people frame them as majestic, their skills, strengths and athleticism centred within the arresting and regal portraits. "It's all about the magic of a short moment: to capture someone's emotions and authenticity," she says. "Creating this memory with a photograph, and telling a story with it, can be really powerful."

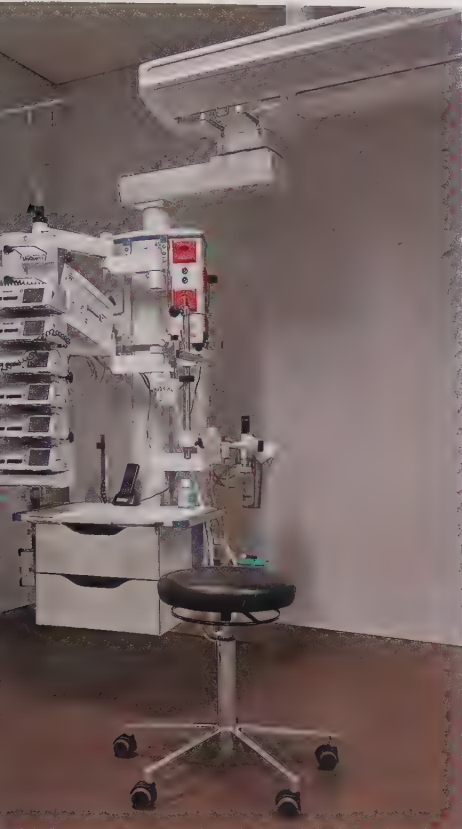
The work of all Portrait of Humanity Volume 4 Series winners has been exhibited at PHOTO22, Melbourne, and Indian Photo Festival. Winners of the fifth edition of Portrait of Humanity will be announced in February 2023. **BJP**

jonathanliechti.ch  
florencebabinbeaudry.com  
claudiagschwend.ch









This page: From the series *What happens when we die?* © Jonathan Liechti





All images from the series *Artists of Sencirk* © Claudia Gschwend.



**"It's all about the magic of a short moment:  
to capture someone's emotions and  
authenticity. Creating this memory with  
a photograph, and telling a story with it,  
can be really powerful"**  
**Claudia Gschwend**







In the studio with

**The South African mixed-media artist invites us into his Amsterdam studio where imposing collage canvases depicting everyday domestic life take centre stage**

# **Neo Matloga**



I cycle to Neo Matloga's Amsterdam studio on the morning of my 29th birthday. Keen to live up to emailed assurances, I make a pitstop en route for a box of macarons. In the Netherlands, a binding social custom charges celebrants with bringing their own birthday cakes to work. From Centraal Station, a passenger ferry carries me northbound, traversing the IJ river to the city's NDSM neighbourhood. Commuters jostle under an expansive sky, angling for standing room in the autumn sun. Today's remarkable weather, however uncommon, evokes fabled histories of a famous Dutch light, heralded by renowned 17th century landscape painters.

Journeying to Matloga's studio by boat feels particularly appropriate. The NDSM site was once home to a mammoth shipbuilding company, closed for good in the mid-1980s. Taken over by squatters, the complex absorbed waves of artists and creative start-ups at the beginning of the new millennium. More recently, it has made way for the ever-encroaching glass and steel of corporate offices and luxury living. Some conventional industry remains though; beyond an immediate community of photographers, painters, installation artists and VR engineers, Matloga works directly beside a small-scale bicycle manufacturer, while ships are still meticulously repaired in adjacent warehouses.

The studio – where I am greeted with a detox tea – is a kind of box within a box; a rectangle in the belly of a hulking hangar. It is clad, from the outside, in a layer of translucent, pink bubble wrap, presumably to soften the sounds of fellow workers, and as an added layer of insulation. "It gets super cold here in the winter," Matloga complains. Up the stairs via a spacious common area, we pay a brief visit to a neighbouring photo studio, where

we are introduced to its operators' projects. "Most of the time, we bump into each other in the kitchen. That's where we connect, where we decide which exhibitions we want to go to," he explains. "There's definitely a sense of community."

Back in Matloga's studio, three of four internal walls are adorned with his imposing works, all of which are in progress, their textured surfaces rendered in a signature blend of charcoal, photo collage and ink. The fourth edge of the space hosts a kitchenette, overturned blank canvases, hefty boxes of materials, and an expanding library of reference books. Brushes, tools, paint-stained overalls, canisters of ink and adhesives are strewn throughout, while a paper archive of printed faces spills out from cabinets and drawers – to be activated in future compositions. The studio was once smaller, but Matloga extended into a vacant plot to allow for more valuable walking room. Pacing back and forth between canvases, which he develops simultaneously, is an important part of his practice, allowing him to respond freely to the needs of each.

### Mixing it up

Hailing from South Africa, Matloga initially came to Amsterdam strictly to paint. But during a two-year stint at De Ateliers, an intensive postgraduate residency programme, he decided to switch mediums. "I felt like oil painting was something I needed to understand scientifically; it seemed too sophisticated," he recalls. "I needed to resurrect a sense of rawness." Experiments with charcoal line drawings followed, as did trials with ink, which offered his works a visceral fluidity. Both are combined with cut-out, collaged photographs – sourced primarily from magazines or newspapers, and printed with varying degrees of sharpness, contrast and opacity. "With painting, it wouldn't make sense to render everything in the same way, so mixing it up gives some vibrations to the work. It makes these paintings beautiful ugly things!"

Matloga describes what his works depict as "socially confirmed scenes": of everyday domestic life, Black joy, of people sharing a coffee, families listening to music, gossiping, dancing, of couples kissing or courting. Each work draws inspiration from a vast range of sources – be it the artist's childhood memories, his dreams and travels, or perhaps another artwork, a newspaper article, a story or a recent conversation. The universality of these scenes is enhanced by Matloga's application of photo collage. Gathering and reworking people from print publications, family albums, video stills and newspapers, the social status of his human subjects dissolves on canvas; hierarchies are flattened as the faces of friends, celebrities, family members and politicians merge.

When discussing his practice, Matloga foregrounds the significance of formal elements – materiality, composition, structure. These same concerns shape his interests in the work of other artists, from the 'painterly layers' of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner to Lubaina Himid's festive, theatre-inspired scenes: "I guess I tend to appreciate the work before going into the whys," he muses. Like Himid, Matloga describes his working process as akin to





**“With painting, it wouldn’t make sense to render everything in the same way, so mixing it up gives some vibrations to the work. It makes these paintings beautiful ugly things”**  
**Neo Matloga**







staging a theatre piece: "You need some lighting, some props, a stage, a cast... it's like putting all those theatrical elements together in a box." Where many artists choose to work in splendid isolation, free from the weight of external references, Matloga exhibits an openness for creative exchange. Incidentally, the very pieces we see hanging in his studio – their protagonists' eyes gazing back at us – are destined for a show in Antwerp, to be set in dialogue with works by the late Paula Rego.

The notion of home is another central aspect of Matloga's work. The treasured objects that surround his characters are the kind of keepsakes "that make a house a home". The artist lights up visibly at the mention of Limpopo, the South African province where his former family home has become a second studio – offering an escape from miserable Dutch winters. "I have goosebumps just talking about it," he says, "because that's where the spark is for my work." In the time he spends there, a gentler rhythm takes over, while the dual obligations of family and village life become a direct source of inspiration; tight-knit communities are always a "good place for thinking about human behaviour", a far cry from the lonely individualism of northern Europe.

During our exchanges, Matloga is notably hesitant to dissect his work's politics – and it is easy to understand why. Portrayals of Blackness, however universal, are

interpreted far too readily through this lens; in some way, Matloga's work proffers a refreshing counter-image to many such charged narratives. But in his fixation on home, quiet political undertones do surface, without ever being floodlit. In the years of apartheid, and after its dissolution, any house was an invaluable safe space; a place of retreat from the turbulent world outside, where private dramas displaced broader social crises. "The home was where people could let loose and speak about literally everything," he explains. "Whether it was the new political announcement on the radio or the latest gossip from down the street, home became the pulse of everything that was happening. To this day, it still is."

The longer I spend at Matloga's studio, the more I observe the finer details – distinguishing rigid brushstrokes from softer charcoal finger-markings. I ponder the inner worlds of his collaged characters, and realise that his palette, though restrained, is far from monochromatic. Shades of brown, stone and deep purple linger next to black and white. With photographs taken and artworks discussed, the visit concludes with a gossip of our own. We talk over tea and macarons, exchanging stories of art, work and life in the city. Later, Matloga's record player whirs into life. It is a humble yet communal scene, befitting of the canvases looming over us. **BJP**

[neomatloga.com](http://neomatloga.com)















**Despite the challenges of scarce resources and strict censorship laws, the two-person team behind Matca – an online journal, community space and publishing imprint in Hanoi – are on a mission to uplift Vietnamese photography**

Words by Marigold Warner

# Building blocks

It is a bright autumn day in London when we meet the pair behind online journal, community space and publishing imprint, Matca. Based in Hanoi, Vietnam, Linh Pham, Matca's co-founder, and Ha Dao, its editor, are part way through a 10-day networking trip across the UK funded by a grant from the British Council. They have visited Belfast to meet the team behind *Source Magazine*, and Bristol for the annual Books on Photography (BOP) bookfair. En route, they have amassed 60kg of photobooks, which they plan to haul home in their suitcases. It is difficult to buy these titles in Vietnam due to rocketing shipping costs, they say, but also the country's strict censorship laws implemented by its communist government. Even online orders can fail to turn up.

This lack of resources – just one of the hurdles prospective artists in Vietnam face – is at the root of Matca's inception. Pham, who co-founded the organisation in 2016, alongside two other photographers who are no longer part of its day-to-day running, began exploring photography around 10 years ago. "I was looking for educational resources, or some sort of mentor, from which I could learn the craft," he says. "We have a main government agency that supports photography, but even then it's kind of like propaganda. We have no infrastructure supporting independent practitioners." Pham had to navigate his own way into the industry. He travelled to festivals around Asia – such as Cambodia's Angkor Photo, China's Pingyao International Photography Festival and Malaysia's OBSCURA Festival – making connections in neighbouring countries with





a more established photography scene. Eventually he secured work as a photojournalist covering Vietnam and south-east Asia, and has since been commissioned by organisations including Getty Images, *The New York Times* and *National Geographic*. Pham built his career out of curiosity and determination, but for the majority of people in Vietnam, the inspiration to do so is difficult to find. “I decided that I needed to create a platform, to provide the information that I wished I could have had in the beginning,” he says.

Matca is the only Vietnamese outlet specialising in contemporary photography. It takes the form of a website due to financial constraints, but also to make it internationally accessible. “From the beginning, it was clear to me that [the journal] had to be bilingual,” says Pham. “There is a lot of great work around but no opportunities to be seen outside of [our] personal bubbles.” Pham recruited photographer and writer Dao to join the team as managing editor and programme coordinator a few months after launch. In Vietnamese, Matca (‘Mắt Cá’) means ‘Fisheye’: “the ultra wide-angle lens so as to capture the bigger picture of Vietnam’s photography scene,” Dao explains. She has commissioned over 200 articles, including interviews with local photographers, and more practically focused pieces, discussing the benefits of enrolling on a residency programme, for example. Matca has built a strong, organic local following and attracted international attention from academics, curators and researchers.

“I think of what we do as mapping – locating photography practices in Vietnam, finding people, featuring their work and interviewing them,” says Dao. “[In Vietnam], personal projects have no outlet. Imagine you are a young, emerging photographer, and you’ve been shooting a project for a while. You look around and you see no opportunity to get further. Publishing a book is expensive; exhibitions are apparently only for very established artists... A photography career is so short-lived here. For us, as a tiny organisation with little resources, featuring these artists online was a way to keep a record of works and ideas that would otherwise be scattered.”

Education is one of Matca’s core pillars. In 2019, the organisation opened a physical space, allowing it to host regular workshops covering subjects such as how to edit a body of work, build a portfolio and write a CV. “People here don’t have access to that, we’re running in a completely different system,” says Pham. The space functions as a gallery too, although it is registered as a coffee shop. According to Pham and Dao, independent organisations in Vietnam cannot legally register as galleries. “It’s a bigger issue with the legal system, because many art spaces in Vietnam aren’t registered – not as a gallery, a non-profit, or even a social enterprise,” Dao explains. This can be problematic when meeting the criteria for international grants. Some institutions will make an exception for Vietnam to ensure that informal organisations can apply.





Matca's publishing imprint, Makét, arrived alongside the gallery as an "extension of our vision," says Dao. They have published three books to date and are planning more. Their latest publication, *Makét 02: From Here On Out*, profiles four emerging Vietnamese artists: Binh Dang, Nguyen Duy Tuan, Nguyen Dinh Phong and Thi My Lien Nguyen. Publishing is a challenging business, but it is made even harder in Vietnam due to censorship laws. In order to produce and freely distribute a book, makers must obtain two types of permit – a printing permit and a distribution permit – which can only be issued by state-owned publishing houses. Some individuals choose to self-print small runs of zines or hand-made books, but this can be a risk. "We have to compromise a lot," says Pham. "With the publishing house, the printers and the authorities. That's something we need to keep in mind from the beginning." For Vietnamese practitioners, acts of self-censorship often happen at the genesis of a project: "We know what's going to work and what's not going to work," says Pham. Even so, the system can still be unpredictable. Binh Dang's work, for example – which depicts animals suspended in jars of rice wine [5] – was almost censored due to it promoting the consumption of alcohol.

When we speak again in early November, it is a relief to hear that Pham and Dao have successfully rehomed the 60kg of photobooks to Hanoi. These will provide reference material for the organisation's workshops and Pham's and Dao's personal practices.

Despite the restrictions, the organisation has already achieved so much, filling the gaps in education and inspiration for future generations of Vietnamese artists. But as detailed in an open letter on its website: "Matca is not just a still image, Matca is a long story that is being told. We hope that you will also accept and believe in what we believe in and join us in the challenging but equally exciting journey ahead." **BJP**

matca.vn  
ha-dao.com  
linh-pham.com

- 1 From the series *Forget Me Not*, 2017 © Ha Dao.
- 2 Linh Pham and Ha Dao © Nguyễn Vũ.
- 3 From the series *Our Mother the Mountain* © Linh Pham.
- 4 A group critique session with Pipo Nguyen-duy, 2022 © Le Xuan Phong.
- 5 From the series *Wildlife* © Binh Dang.







▶ We kick off 2023 with the Performance issue. Staging, actors and props have long been used in photography to re-enact storylines and experiences, or imagine new narratives. Artists perform for the camera, in exploration and activism, using the lens as a prop or as a spotlight. There is also the performance of the image itself.

In our next issue, we speak to **Morgan Ashcom** about his project, *Open*. In 2009, Ashcom spent a few weeks in Palestine making photographs only to have his film container opened during an Israeli police search on the way out of the country. Returning to the images nearly a decade later, he found they had taken on new meaning speaking directly to the political conflict. We also delve into the work of **Carrie Mae Weems** ahead of her major solo exhibition at the Barbican. Plus we speak to **Shoair Mavlian** as she begins her tenure as director of The Photographers' Gallery, London.

▶

# PERFORMANCE



In *Intelligence*, a conversation with Brian Piper, the curator of an exhibition at New Orleans Museum of Art, explores the reclamation of Black American studio photography. In *Creative Brief*, Jackson Bowley discusses the anarchic celebration of beauty that is *Circus*, the magazine he founded. Meanwhile, in *Bookshelf*, we preview titles that manipulate the dynamics between space, people and apparatus, and which, by taking diversity and democracy as organising principles, find new angles and timelines within photography's history.

Called to the Camera **Pages 163–167**

Creative Brief **Pages 168–169**

Bookshelf **Pages 170–177**

# Intelligence



# Beyond servitude

**The history of photography has largely neglected the social, political and artistic significance of Black American studio photographers. An exhibition at New Orleans Museum of Art challenges that notion, exploring these artists' work from the medium's inception to the present day. Sala Elise Patterson speaks to its curator, Brian Piper**



*Untitled (Bride and Groom), 1926 © James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

In his 2016 survey *Photography in America*, author Miles Orvell notes that when the daguerreotype arrived in the United States in 1839, most Black Americans were living as the physical property of whites. That translated into two kinds of depictions of Black people by the new medium: in roles of servitude or as specimens in pseudo-scientific enquiries into racial difference undertaken to justify slavery further. In early images, Black people appeared “as objects of analysis, not as sentient human beings,” Orvell writes.

However, as Black photographers began producing daguerreotypes, many trained their lens on their own people, and so began the slow process of wresting the image of the Black American from its racist origins, a process that continues today. In its nascent phase, that process was driven by Black photographers who owned

commercial studios, one of the main ways they practised photography for the first 150 years of the art form's existence. These men and a few women set up businesses in their communities around the country, documenting the people and life that unfolded there.

Those photographers, their creative output, that process of reclamation and its effect on photographic practice and American culture are the subjects of an exhibition at New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA). *Called to the Camera: Black American Studio Photographers* gathers images produced between 1840 and today by names familiar (James Van Der Zee, Addison Scurlock) and less so (Robert and Henry Hooks, Florestine Perrault Collins). The show guides visitors through the rich world of visual expression created by this under-celebrated American cohort. The experience is immersive: alongside more



than 250 photographs, there is studio ephemera, equipment and a life-sized reproduction of a studio waiting room.

In the hectic days following the show's opening this autumn, Brian Piper, the exhibition's curator and the assistant curator of photographs at NOMA, talked to us about his vision for the show and why it was a critical narrative to bring to the public and the historical record.

**Sala Elise Patterson:** *How was this exhibition born?*

**Brian Piper:** First, I must say that Dr Deborah Willis laid the groundwork for this field, helping to create the study of Black photography. What first drew me to this project and topic personally was thinking about Black photography studios as potential places for the development of culture and political life as well as for commerce and art. The photo studio was where a diverse cross-section of Black Americans would come during the first century following photography's invention because it was less common for people to own a camera in general. And having your portrait made was so important for Black Americans during this period.





**“Photography and power are wrapped up in one. The camera has historically been used in negative ways towards Black people. Taking control of that was a powerful thing that these photographers were engaged in”**  
**Brian Piper, curator**

Opposite, top: *A hand-tinted portrait of a young woman, 1950s © Rev Henry Clay Anderson/Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture*

Opposite, below: *Eartha Kitt Teaching a Dance Class at Harlem YMCA, c1955. Photograph by Austin Hansen used by permission of Joyce Hansen. Courtesy of Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.*

Left: *Portrait of a young woman dressed in white, 1920–1928 © Florestine Perrault Collins. Courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection.*

As the project progressed, it became more of a story about the role of these spaces in American photographic history and the work that was done there. That includes the extent to which these photographers were included or not in the stories that mainstream Western art museums tell about the history of American photography.

**SEP:** *Tell me about the importance placed on portraiture within the Black community in photography's early days.*

**BP:** Many thinkers and leaders, from Frederick Douglass to Ida B Wells to WEB Du Bois, articulated how mainstream visual culture would not treat Black people and Black bodies with care or affirmation. So the studio photographer became a point of pride and a source for affirming images for Black Americans. Self-representation was very important, but it was also a metaphorical self-possession for a figure like Douglass.

**SEP:** *As traditional as many of these images appear, they are quite radical. Can you talk about that?*

**BP:** Photography and power are wrapped up in one. The camera has historically been used in negative ways towards Black people. Taking control of that was a powerful thing that these photographers were engaged in. One photographer in the show that stands out in that regard is a contemporary artist, Elliott Jerome Brown Jr. He is a portrait photographer who makes images that tell us about the sitter but allow that individual to maintain some privacy; to keep something for themselves. Many of the people he photographs are Black women and Black queer people. He's thinking about how cameras, portraiture and photography have been employed to dehumanise these individuals.



Right: Kennedy, 2016 © Endia Beal.

Opposite: *Untitled (Marvin and Morgan Smith and Sarah Lou Harris Carter)*, 1940 © Morgan and Marvin Smith. Courtesy of Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library

We've also included work from Endia Beal [right] from a series where she photographed Black women in their homes in front of a backdrop that looks like it could be from one of these commercial studios. But it's essentially a picture of a cubicle farm. Part of the work is their testimony about working in white corporate workplaces. So there are photographers who – whether it's a nod or a more explicit reference – are thinking about the structures of portrait photography and bringing them to work that is more consciously fine art. But also, in some ways, more overtly political. That engagement and thinking will push the field forward for years to come.

**SEP:** *Were early studio portraits something that people, regardless of class and standing in the Black community, would have prized?*

**BP:** That is something the show also tries to go into: that as much as they were liberatory, in some ways, these spaces could also be very restrictive in terms of class and gender prescriptions. Respectability politics was a significant factor in how people in this era wanted their photographs to look. So it was uncommon to see different representations of occupations, economic levels or gender and sexuality expressions. They appear in some images, which are some of the most interesting works in the exhibition. Indeed, as much as these studios were aspirational, they could also be restrictive to parts of Black identity. [Cultural theorist and activist] bell hooks has written about how these positive images were incredibly powerful, moving and important in terms of self-worth and self-representation. But in some ways they might have precluded different kinds of Black expressive culture.



**SEP:** *How did you decide on which photographers to include?*

**BP:** The photographers we chose were adept at making portraits but also at fine finishing techniques and different editorial tropes. They're also very good at making photographs outside of the studio. I wanted to show how those two sides of their practices were inextricable. I also wanted to illustrate that it was happening across the country, in every region and some cities. It gives people a chance to think about what differences existed in different spaces or communities and how the photographic output of these men and women reflected that.

**SEP:** *What is the gender breakdown of photographers in the show?*

**BP:** I would have liked to include more women whose names were on the front of the studio. But the work in portrait studios – by Black and white photographers – was often very gendered. Studio portraits involved retouching the negative to mask imperfections and sometimes tinting the prints. Often that work was completed by women. They're all part of this story, but they don't necessarily have their names on the studio. One example of a woman-led studio that we have been able to include was Florestine Perrault Collins [page 165], here in New Orleans.



She ran several successful studios under her name, initially in her home and then in a commercial space. When she opened her studio in 1920, she was the first Black woman photographer in the city and was the only one for quite some time.

**SEP:** *How did most of these photographers come to the discipline?*

**BP:** It changed over time, like most things. Augustus Washington took it up when people would go to the optician, order a lens, build their own camera and learn how to make daguerreotypes or have somebody teach them. He learned so that he could support himself through Dartmouth College. James Presley Ball learned from another Black photographer from Boston who came to Virginia and taught him. Then Ball moved around, settled in Cincinnati, taught his brother and Alexander Thomas. Eventually Ball taught his own son and daughter to make photographs. Addison Scurlock learned from photographer Moses Rice then taught his sons, Robert and George. So it would often spread through families, networks and apprenticeships.

As Black photographers began to grow in number, several of them learned from each other. That's an important

story because film technology was not designed to properly render Black people's skin tones, and that information was not in trade manuals. So Black photographers had to learn from each other and through practice to effectively photograph their customers. After World War Two, several studios started formal education programmes to train Black veterans who had come home to be photographers. It was also a very savvy business move because these veterans were coming home with money from the GI Bill and looking for places to spend it. So it was a way to buoy their studio businesses and create more photographers. Robert Scurlock started the Capital School of Photography in Washington, DC, in 1948, an integrated and co-educational school.

Finally, a number of photographers in the show either learned to be photographers or honed their craft in the armed services. Ernest Withers, for one. Austin Hansen [page 164] started taking photographs as a young man in the Virgin Islands and then joined the Navy and learned more. Marvin Smith [above] joined the Navy and taught other sailors how to photograph. So that was also a driver of photographic industries in Black communities after the World Wars.

**SEP:** *One point you have made is that Black studio photographers have been operating at the medium's cutting edge since its invention. What has been the effect on fine art photography?*

**BP:** While studio photographers, especially Black studio photographers, have been thought of as outside the developments in 'art photography', they're absolutely pushing it forward. They're cognisant of everything that's happening in the field and are capable of adopting what would have been referred to elsewhere as pictorial techniques, like shallow depth-of-field, highly retouched negatives and things that people often associate with pictorial photography as practised by Alfred Stieglitz, early Imogen Cunningham and others. They're bringing that into the portrait studio. But they're also able to apply what they're doing in their community for event photography or advertising. Work by other photographers in the exhibition falls under modernism, focusing on form and light. Everything we are used to talking about in photography, they're doing it and pushing it forward.

**SEP:** *What effect do you think this show will have on the museum and the community?*

**BP:** For so long, photo studios were neglected from the art museum because they were considered commercial. I hope the exhibition makes the point that these photographs can be for the everyday, but they can be spectacular too.

The show is also an effort to expand what people can expect to see on the wall of a museum – expand who is in that picture, who made that picture and the number of stories we're telling at NOMA. People are rethinking what museums are for and what they should do. And I hope this exhibition is part of that effort.

Finally, I hope the show will enrich people's understanding of photographic history and that several of the photographers get their own solo exhibitions. While some of the names are familiar worldwide, others deserve greater recognition. I hope that a number of projects will come out of this one. **BP**

## On show

*Called to the Camera: Black American Studio Photographers* is on show at New Orleans Museum of Art until 08 January 2023. [noma.org](http://noma.org)



## Creative Brief Jackson Bowley



Founded in 2020, *Circus* is a bold and anarchic celebration of beauty photography. Comprised of 20 A1-sized posters – each created by a different artist – the publication is intended to be ripped apart and stuck onto walls. The poster magazine is the brainchild of Jackson Bowley, a London-based beauty photographer and Central Saint Martins graduate. After five years of working in the beauty industry, Bowley wanted to create a platform that could champion artistic freedom and emerging talent, and break the rules. The second issue, themed 'The Impossible Issue', features artists including Alfie Kungu, David Brandon Geeting [4], Maisie Cousins, Aidan Zamiri [1] and Sasha Chaika. Here, Bowley tells us more about *Circus*' ethos and production process.

### How did the idea for *Circus* come about?

The catalyst was definitely fuelled by post-lockdown boredom, mixed with a frustration towards the editorial approach to beauty photography, especially as it seems to be such a thriving genre. I've been shooting beauty imagery for a while, but found it difficult to position my work within an editorial context. It seemed to be too out-there, but also not positioned enough within fashion. Finding publications to work with always seemed tricky. I'd been hoping and praying that a magazine focused on beauty would come along but it never did. The gap for *Circus* was very apparent and with so much free time on my hands, I decided to create one myself.

### Printed in A1 poster size, the magazine is huge. Why did you choose this format?

Why not? There's been a huge resurgence in independent publishing over the past 10 years, which is great to see, but a lot of magazines stick to similar formats. I've always loved seeing my work blown up and displaying it, so the format of *Circus* being a poster magazine was one of the main starting points.

### How would you describe *Circus*' visual identity?

Chaotic and a bit disjointed. I wouldn't say there's one visual style attached to it, which is very important to me. As a poster magazine, I wanted the images to serve different tastes. The main thread running through *Circus* is definitely the freedom to push ideas and get a bit crazy with them.

### How do you select the photographers you work with, and what's your approach to formulating a brief?

I do a lot of research when looking for talent. I wanted to avoid *Circus* becoming an echo chamber of my friends. It was important for me to find creatives from across the field and not just those based in London. As for the brief, it depends. With some contributors, I let them run wild. Their visual style is what drew me to them so I just get them to create whatever they see fit, or something they haven't had a chance to produce for a publication before. Other times, I like to pair up people who wouldn't usually work together. I try hard not to interfere too much with what people make for the magazine as that's something that I find quite irritating when I'm the one shooting.

### The magazine is not only a celebration of beauty photography, but also the hairstylists, make-up artists and nail technicians who work behind the scenes. Why is this important?

Because it's an integral part of how the work is made. Photography, unfortunately, is still very hierarchical and that's something I wanted to challenge. I work with a lot of different people in the beauty world, and it was important for me to let them have a voice when commissioning shoots. **BJP**

[circuscircuscircuscircus.com](http://circuscircuscircuscircus.com)

Portrait © Jackson Bowley.

1 Image © Aidan Zamiri for *Circus*.

2 Image © Ian MacNicol for *Circus*.

3 Image © Nina Carelli for *Circus*.

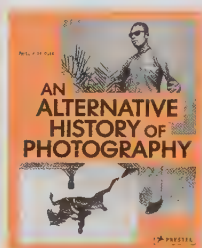
4 Image © David Brandon Geeting for *Circus*.

5 Image © Henry Gorse for *Circus*.





**Reviews by  
Hannah Abel-Hirsch,  
Ellie Howard, Gem Fletcher,  
Alex Merola, Izabela  
Radwanska Zhang**



# Bookshelf

## Orifice + Aperture

Paul Mpagi Sepuya

TBW Books, \$80

Paul Mpagi Sepuya's latest book, *Orifice + Aperture*, is theoretically titillating. It manipulates the dynamics between space, people and photographic apparatus within the studio, exploring the structures ingrained in historical traditions of photography and the dynamics of queer sociality.

The photographs that comprise the publication display spatial arrangements that obstruct and lengthen the depth-of-field in unusual ways. A number feel like 'collages' with several image planes dissecting the frame. Mirrors create mise en abymes, and body parts are fragmented. Traditionally, portraiture tends to foreground a subject. However, in many portraits that populate *Orifice + Aperture*, photographic apparatus – tripods, cameras, curtains, screens, clamps – become the central focus.

The photographic studio has often been a site of intimacy. But also where complex and questionable power dynamics play out. Nude models from Sepuya's social circle bare all for the images. However, they remain anonymous, their faces obscured. Indeed, the artist's endless repositioning of the elements in the studio shapes a new dynamic of seeing and being seen. **BJP**

tbwbooks.com



Image © Paul Mpagi Sepuya.





Image © Elena Subach.

## Hidden/CXOBAHE

Elena Subach

Besides Press, £22

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, workers and volunteers in Lviv rushed to preserve the medieval city's rich cultural heritage. Religious statues and other artefacts were carefully wrapped in protective layers where they stood or stored underground in a secret location in the expectation of tanks rolling in. The photographer and curator Elena Subach captured these solemn scenes for posterity. The resulting publication, *Hidden/CXOBAHE*, is hole-punched and bound with a document clasp, functioning as an archival record of this moment in time. "I document the present because history, in its concentrated form, is unfolding here and now," says Subach. One deeply touching photograph shows a man cradling a statue as if it were an elderly father. Elsewhere, the bleeding, pale body of Christ is carefully brought down on his cross. An essay by Ukrainian author Yurko Prohasko discusses looking into the eyes of the statue of Lviv's patron saint and protector, Jan of Dukla, before it was secreted away.

*Hidden*, the book's final section, shows these figures wrapped and isolated in darkness to protect their location. Most are effigies of martyred saints and angels who are supposedly divine in their exceptional qualities. Through them, the story becomes one of Ukraine's determination, facing the evil of war, to remember and protect what is intrinsically good. The hope is that peace will have returned to Ukraine when the figures once again see the light. **BJP**

[besidespress.com](http://besidespress.com)





## Master Rituals II: Weston's Nudes

Tarrah Krajnak

TBW Books, \$65

Tarrah Krajnak echoes Edward Weston's (1886–1958) original *Nudes* in her latest publication: the gently curving silhouette of a woman's physique elegantly framed in black-and-white. However, despite borrowing Weston's aesthetic, Krajnak does so to critique it. She employs props to emphasise how the late photographer cropped his images, dissecting the female form into its constituent parts: a foot gently resting upon a smooth calf, the undulating outline of shoulders tapering into a waist and back out. Wooden squares and blocks of concrete demarcate, almost violently, the edges of Weston's images, illustrating how the photographer framed what he desired of his models, creating beautiful but objectifying images.

The photographs' captions reference Weston's models, Charis Wilson and Bertha Wardell, reinserting them into an art historical narrative that has mostly excluded them. Krajnak holds a shutter release, symbolising her ownership over these images, thereby highlighting the little control Wilson and Wardell ultimately exerted with Weston holding the camera. The Peruvian artist's self-portraits also critique the whiteness of the original images, typical of the Eurocentric standards of beauty that have dominated, and continue to dominate, the medium. **BJP**

tbwbooks.com

## Sorry I Gave Birth I Disappeared But Now I'm Back

Andi Galdi Vinko

Trolley Books, £40

*Sorry I Gave Birth I Disappeared But Now I'm Back* emphasises the need for an honest conversation surrounding the messiness and contradiction that comes with becoming a mother. It rallies against the expectation to constantly maintain an unrealistic vision of strength, joy and empowerment before, during and after pregnancy. "In the midst of all the vulnerability, the pain, the tiredness and mess, they tell you: 'Remember to stay desirable too, so your partner sees the same woman he fell in love with.' How should I stay mysterious? I'm bleeding, leaking."

As an artist, Galdi Vinko felt a shift in identity when she had her baby. She gained a different persona with new responsibilities, pulling her away from a practice of prolific creativity. She wants to normalise these experiences so mothers never feel that they are failing and are able to enjoy the precious moments with their newborns without the added pressure of productivity.

The publication has a foreword written by friend and fellow mother, Charlotte Jansen, and is designed by Emma Scott-Child in a format just larger than A6 with an exposed spine. "The size of it is meant to fit in a woman's bag," Galdi Vinko explains. "I want it to be like a bible, which you can pass down to your best friend, to your daughter. Like a codex for mothers and parents." **BJP**

trolleybooks.com



Right: Image © Andi Galdi Vinko



## Small Myths

Mikiko Hara

Chose Commune, €50

Snatching fleeting impressions of people, places and things in and around Tokyo, Mikiko Hara's photographs might be described as studies in observation. While this is not necessarily wrong, it is incomplete. What makes Hara such a precious talent in photography is how she has jettisoned, and liberated herself from, the conventions of composition, focal point and subject. Holding the camera at chest level and shooting without the aid of the viewfinder, she lends credence to Roland Barthes' idea that "the photographer's organ is not his eye (which terrifies me), but his finger".

*Small Myths* is a beautiful and modest collection of photographs dated between 1996 (the year Hara staged her first solo show) and 2021. People pass by in the blink of an eye. Fish orbit a tank. A random ray of light. They are nothing-special shots, devoid of self-conscious artistry or high drama but captivating in the best sense of the word. They grab us for their distinctive and particular visions, and persuade us that what Hara's camera saw was worthwhile and true. As Hara articulates it: "My work is probably like a murmuring in someone's ear." **BJP**

[chosecommune.com](http://chosecommune.com)



# An Alternative History of Photography

Phillip Prodger

Prestel, £39.99

Drawn from the Solander Collection, a research project founded by Graham Howe and Phillip Prodger, *An Alternative History of Photography* finds new angles and timelines within photography's history by taking diversity and democracy as its organising principles. With the book featuring obscure photographic works alongside more recognisable images, photography is celebrated as the decentralised and participatory medium that it can and should be. A major exhibition of the same title at The Photographers' Gallery in London runs until 19 February 2023.

The first section in the book explores previous works of photographic history that lent themselves to shaping a 'canon'. To discover why an alternative lens is necessary, author Prodger critiques these earlier surveys as male-dominated, exceptionally white, with a tendency to focus on technical aspects rather than creative expression. The main section, *Plates with Commentary*, takes readers on a loosely chronological journey starting from the advent of photography. Familiar names, like William Henry Fox Talbot and Hippolyte Bayard, are joined by less familiar photographers, such as enigmatic Madame Gelot-Sandoz.

As we cycle through the book, the reality of Prodger's line, "There are an infinite number of answers to the seemingly simple question: what is the history of photography?" becomes clear. The collection contains many rarities and 'firsts', and we are asked to think differently about photography at every turn. **BJP**

prestelpublishing.  
penguinrandomhouse.de

Miles Davis © Lee Friedlander.



## Four Winters

Jem Southam

Stanley/Barker, £44

Deep blues, dusty greys and pastel pinks consume the wintry skies that wind through Jem Southam's *Four Winters*. A sequence of landscapes caught in dawn's soft light or dusk's deepening darkness along a bend in the River Exe over four winters. Southam began the work following a night spent with his younger brother in an emergency ward. "The doctor caring for him had rung to say he thought it unlikely he would live through the night," writes Southam in a text accompanying the images. He did and, returning home that afternoon, Southam found solace by the river. " [It] helped calm me down, and as I walked back along the riverbank in the dark... I decided to return to the same spot at dusk for the rest of the winter."

The images Southam took that year do not feature in *Four Winters* as "on the whole they were unsatisfactory," he writes. Instead, photographs from the following four populate the publication's pages. Atmospheric stills replete with the majestic silhouettes of swans roosting on the river's placid surface or gliding through stretches of sky. Despite the objectively simple subject, a mystery permeates the pages: the images are a window onto a curious world shaped by the seasons. **BJP**

[stanleybarker.co.uk](http://stanleybarker.co.uk)

Image © Jem Southam.





## 90s Archive: Volume One

Marc Vallée

Self-published, £20

Marc Vallée's *90s Archive: Volume One* is a homage to the 10×8 print and a showcase of work shot in London in 1996 and 1998. Indeed, Vallée's discovery of a box of 10×8 prints in his studio, which he printed in the 90s, sparked the idea for the new photobook series, the first instalment of which collates studied colour and black-and-white portraits of friends from the Cass School of Art and the indie and alternative queer club scene. The majority of subjects are pictured in their homes, including Vallée's east London student house from his art-school days, vibrant and dilapidated at once. However, one series captures Vallée's friend Cal against the distinctive backdrop of London's Soho; the iconic Raymond Revuebar in the distance.

The pictures are autobiographical; a window into Vallée's life in 90s London. However, they have a wider historical and political significance, capturing queer youth as the gay community slowly emerged from the horror of the 80s and early-90s global Aids epidemic, Margaret Thatcher and Clause 28, which was in effect until 2003. The simple photobook allows the photographs to breathe; their rich formal qualities and multilayered meanings given space to unfold. And despite being an 'archive', as far-right governments come to power across Europe and the world, Vallée's celebration of queer culture feels as poignant as ever. **BJP**

[marcvallée.co.uk](http://marcvallée.co.uk)

*Cal on a roof in Soho, London, 1996* © Marc Vallée.

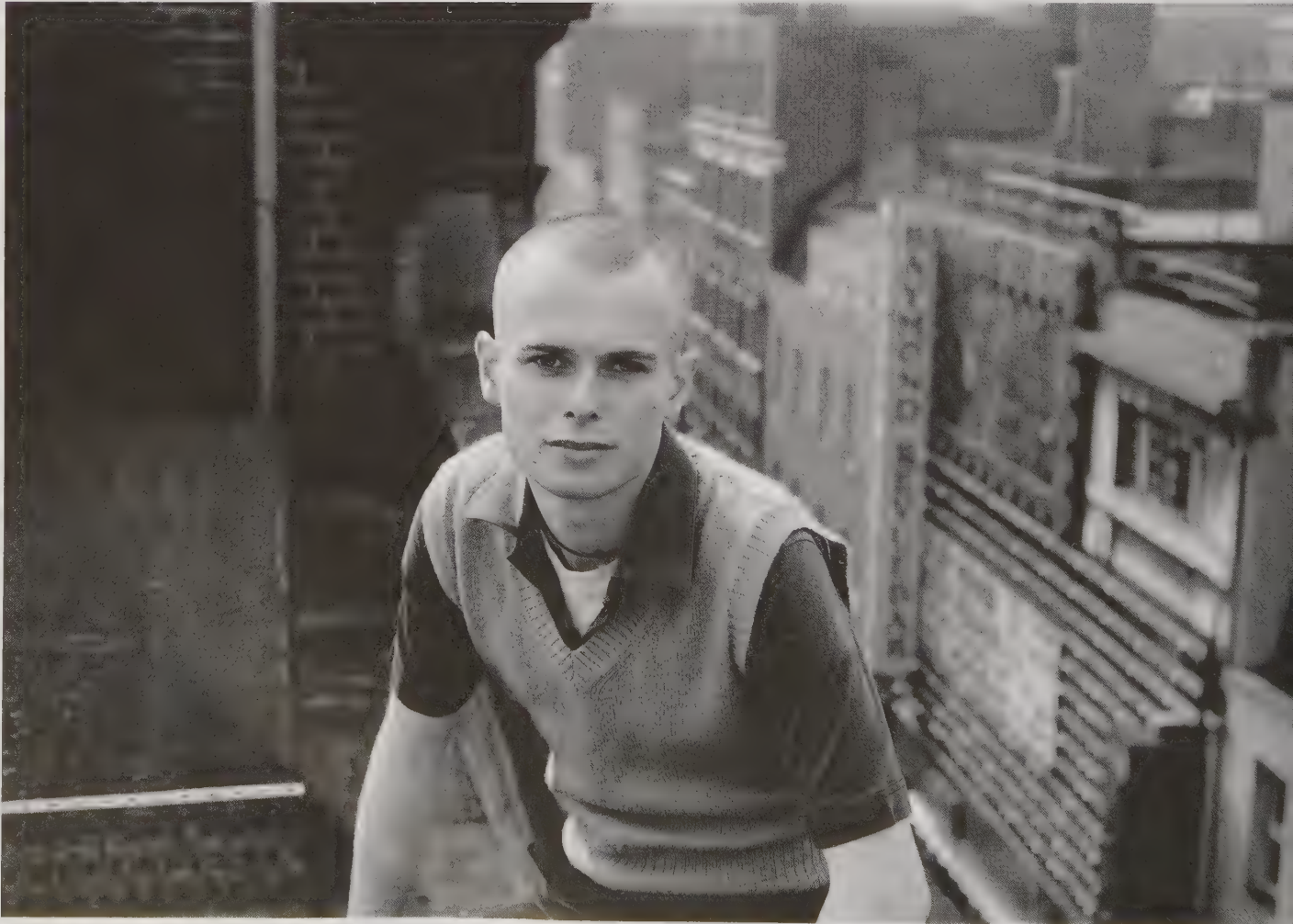






Image © Sem Langendijk.

## Haven

Sem Langendijk

The Eriskay Connection, €38

*Haven* explores the nature of being and place-making within rapidly gentrifying urban landscapes. "This book is the result of the experiences I had growing up in the hinterlands of the city," writes Sem Langendijk. "I couldn't have made this work if I hadn't lived in some extraordinary environments and seen buildings transformed into homes during my childhood."

Two distinct sections comprise the publication. The first centres on communities living in abandoned docklands, such as the Amsterdamsche Droogdok Maatschappij (ADM) in the Dutch capital, which have transformed sites of decay into rich cultural worlds. A magic imbues the self-built architecture and the people who inhabit it. However, these utopian places are only fleeting as the force of urban development bears down. Slowly, gentrification creeps into the photographic narrative until ominous skyscraper office blocks dominate the pages.

The second section, made in collaboration with author Taco Hidde Bakker, focuses on the pair's research into the changing state of docklands and harbours in Western post-industrial cities. We are left questioning the ownership of our city spaces and for who they are ultimately 'regenerated'. **BJP**

eriskayconnection.com

## Arrangements

Carmen Winant

SPBH Editions, £45

The latest book from Carmen Winant, *Arrangements* builds on her practice of constellating found instructional images and animating their potential to transform how we live. It is a photobook that resists explanation; an anti-photobook which is anchorless and breaks the traditional conventions of the genre while also unravelling the very essence of our relationship with images. "It's a project about being alive," says Winant. "How images relate to each other has everything to do with how we relate to each other and configure our bodies in the world."

The source material is eclectic. We encounter images of soldiers, birth, weaving, yoga, self-defence, bathing and space, provoking our imaginations. Unlike previous projects that speak to specific themes, Winant obliterates categories to understand the work in relationship to itself. As we move from pages about achieving biceps to



Spread from *Arrangements* © Carmen Winant.



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those detailing how to care for a pet snake (a third of the material is from juvenile literature), the viewer becomes an active participant in the work. Recalling the agency of Choose Your Own Adventure books, our associations and experiences determine the visual strategies of the project, revealing the mechanisms of the mind as much as the artist's impulses. **BJP**

selfpublishbehappy.com



# Coming up... Life by Ian Beesley

Interview by Marigold Warner



Street corner off Thornton Road, Bradford, 1977 © Ian Beesley.

Bradford-born Ian Beesley has been documenting his home city for over 45 years. His early work in the late-1970s captured the everyday lives of working-class people: kids playing street games, fans chanting for Bradford City FC, and grafters employed in vast Victorian factories. In the 1980s, he proceeded to document the demise of heavy industries, such as mining, iron and steel production. Published by Bluecoat Press, Beesley's upcoming photobook *Life* will present his record of Bradford's shifting social landscape.

## How did you discover photography?

My dad was a keen amateur photographer, so I used to help him develop films in our kitchen from an early age. I left school and worked in a series of labouring jobs, where my fellow workers encouraged me to find a career. Rather than getting trapped in a cycle of unskilled labour, I bought my first camera and went to art college.

## How has Bradford changed over the past 45 years?

The city has struggled with the demise of traditional industry, poor transport links and a lack of investment. It has slowly declined into one of the poorest areas in the UK. Over the last 45 years I have documented this demise of industry in the north, its impact on society, and the closure of the mills, mines and foundries. My work is part of the wider picture on how northern industrial cities have been affected by the political and financial decisions made in Westminster.

## Who is your work for?

I take photographs for the people – working people, who are often overlooked. I always try to give people a print when I have photographed them, and having a connection with the people I am photographing is at the core of my practice. I also try and keep in contact with many of the people I have photographed. It's only fair if I am going

to exhibit or publish their photo that they should be kept informed.

## Could you tell us the story behind the image above?

I took this photo in the late-1970s. I spent days walking the streets of inner-city Bradford photographing children playing street games. This group were playing marbles. Their mother came out to see what I was doing. I told her the purpose of the photos and she was quite happy to chat. The boy at the back with his hands in his pockets got in touch this year after he saw the photo on the BBC. He couldn't remember me taking it, but he recalls his mum speaking of a strange man with a camera, and how she saw him off with a yard brush. He always wondered if that was true as she had a copy of the photo on her mantelpiece. In October, he came to my exhibition at Salt Mills in Bradford with his family and took pride in showing his grandkids where he used to live. **BJP**

[ianbeesley.com](http://ianbeesley.com)





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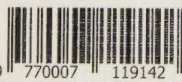
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Plantation in South Carolina, USA,  
in March 1850. Sasha Huber has  
used a staple gun to clothe the  
figures in a gesture of dignity and  
humanity. Drana's attire [front cover]  
is inspired by that of Sojourner Truth,  
the first Black woman to win a court  
case against a white man, in 1828,  
recovering her son from slavery.  
From the series *Tailoring Freedom*  
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